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## YEAR IN REVIEW

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Lavender's Top Stories, Designs, Columns, and Writers

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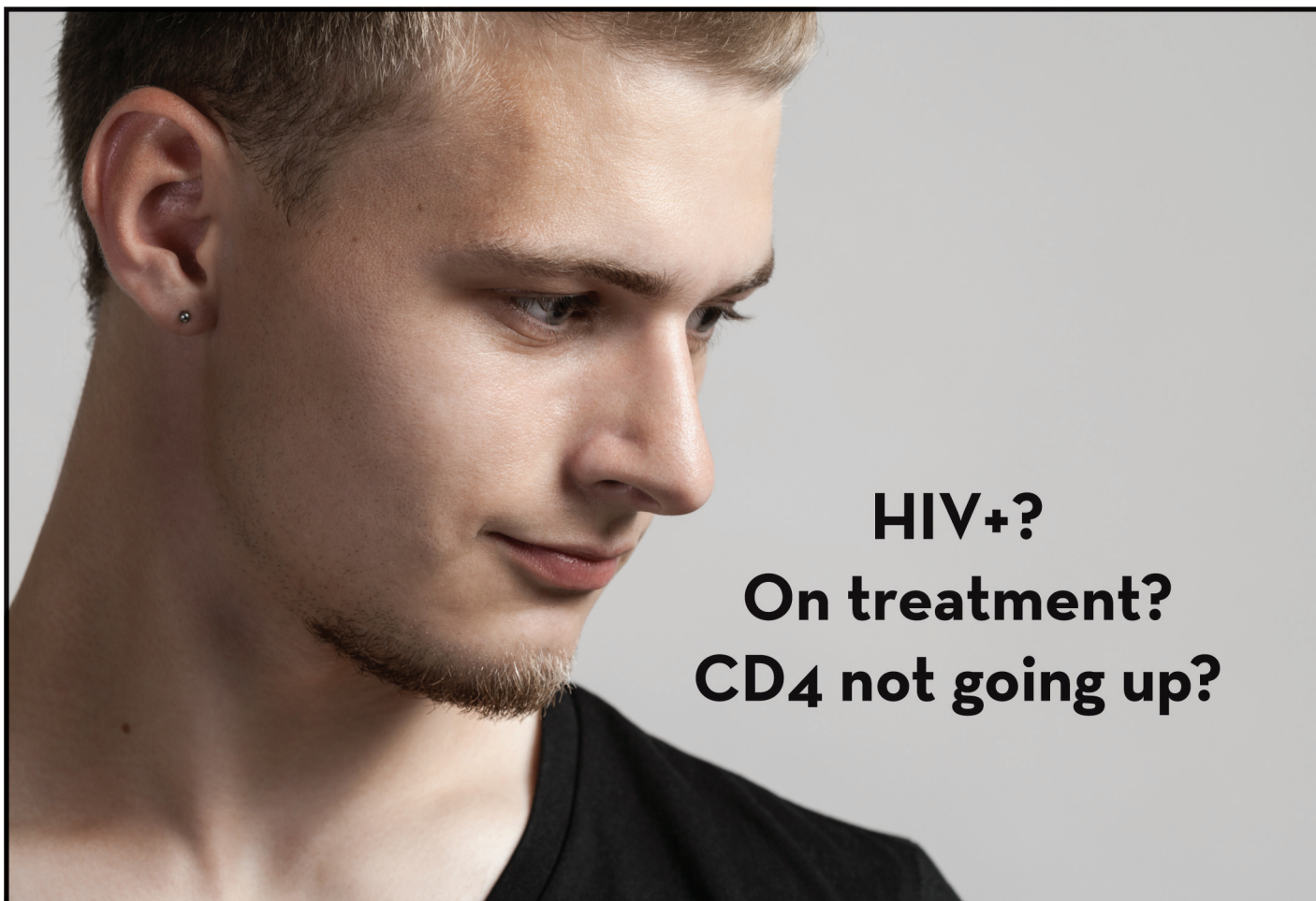
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## ON THE COVER

We celebrate the Best of 2014 in this Year in Review Issue. Pictured here is a scene from *Colossal* by Mixed Blood Theatre, tied for winning Best Production of New Queer Play. Photography by Rich Ryan

**Correction:** The Helmer/Sweiger photos in the Fall Wedding Issue should have been attributed to Kuba Kraszkiewicz of Eyetography.



Page 44: Photo by Hubert Bonnet. Page 26: Photo by Hubert Bonnet. Page 40: Photo by Visit Detroit.  
Page 57: Photo by Randy Stern.

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# The Closing of the Year

This is the last full issue of 2014. Wow. The year has flown by. With the Yellow Pages coming out before the calendar turns, this is the last one with editorial content, so I'll be dancing a jig over the holidays as I get a reprieve from the relentless editorial calendar. As much as I love what I do, it's good to hit the reset button and really consider what 2015 will bring; which will be, in two words, a lot.

Looking back at 2014, we have seen great successes. This issue is our opportunity to review them and see them more in hindsight. What Lavender does daily and bi-weekly is create content for the community that fits into a larger picture. By looking back at that content, we can see how what we've done can shape a narrative for Minnesota, this community, and beyond. What do our statistics show us? They reveal what's important, what you liked, what was shared, what resonated.

In our print magazine, people were abuzz about people...and fitness. As shown on pages 36 & 37, learning about where and how to get in shape was important, but *people* are where our hearts and minds are. People are what make this community what it is. We met couples who married and have kids, we met faith leaders, we mourned a murder in the community, we celebrated our Lavender Community Award Winners and our Class of 2014. We met some celebrities, including Jaiyah Saelua, John Gidding, Mayda Miller, and Grant Whittaker. We learned about each other and how we've made our own ways through life in this community.

Online, we had a different set of stories that caught the attention of readers far and wide, detailed on pages 38 & 39. Our big scene-stealers at LavenderMagazine.com are always the online magazine and Big Gay News, as well as the fantastic event photography. Whether you attend events in the community or not, you can find photos of the beautiful people who are out there at fundraisers and shows, political rallies and vigils, archived in history on our website. What also can be found in our list of popular online stories are reviews of shows that are performed locally as well as interviews with national stars like Blake McIver and Sandra Bernhard. Lav.fash got some great attention with one of their many fashion shows and Randy Stern's Ride Review had some particularly hot reviews of some of the Hondas he test drove this year. It's all in a day's work on the internet.

As far as our different platforms are concerned, we've seen increased use and involvement on both our website and our iPad/iPhone app downloads. Our website continues providing unique content for online reading only, while our app increases availability of our bi-weekly issue (and it's delivered to your device automatically). As always, our content is free and presented without any gateways to go through; you don't have to sign in, you don't have to watch a video to see it, you don't have to answer a survey question, you don't have to wait through ad screens...you get what you came for, immediately and without a catch. And we intend to keep it that way.

Finally, as a measure of third-party esteem, we won a number of Excellence Awards at the Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association's annual awards ceremony in November, as listed on pages 32 & 33. Going to that awards ceremony for the past three years has meant a night of nerves and nausea for me each time, but it's always well worth the suffering. Taking home 12 of them was the best we've done so far in my time at Lavender, something I hope to exceed next year. What's more, to my surprise and delight, we were one of the finalists for Magazine of the Year, meaning we are in the top five of the eligible publications that belong to the MMPA. The pool of magazines is deep and large, and we're one of the big fish this year. That's an achievement not just for Lavender, but for the community we represent; and it's one that I take very seriously as we move into 2015.

Looking ahead to 2015, I'll be busier than ever, introducing ten new issue concepts to the editorial calendar. This year, we introduced four quarterlies—health, fitness, fashion, and children & family—which are proving to be great areas of growth for the magazine and the audience. Next year, within the 26-issue cycle, we're adding to our home & garden issues, we'll double our health & fitness coverage, and we'll include more quarterlies—senior living and pets—as well as issues dedicated to money, sports, cars, wedding style, and other topics specific to the rainbow community. In there, we'll keep our columnists and add a few more, as well as maintain inclusive content coverage for the community. There'll be a Lavender Sports Page on our website. We'll have even more larger issues than previous years and our footprint will continue its expansion locally as well as globally. And, since this summary is pretty much a syllabus of everything I need to get busy studying and researching, I admit that I'm pretty excited for next year (maybe a little pre-exhausted, too). Really, I can't wait.

So, what I've got left to say for 2014 is a big heartfelt thank you. Thank you for reading, thank you for attending events, thank you for following us on Facebook and Twitter, thank you for answering my calls and emails, thank you for giving us your time and talent and stories and ideas, thank you for supporting our advertisers. I wish you the best during this holiday season and toast your health and happiness at the closing of the year. ■



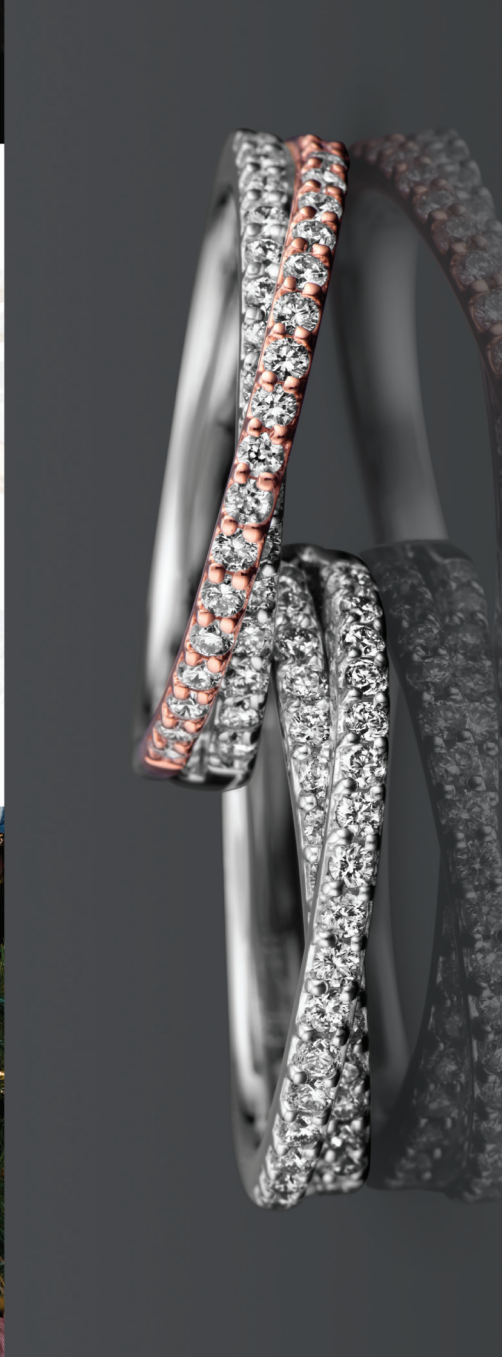
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# New Year's Resolutions, One Page at a Time

Looking into another New Year, I see too many dark things to be cheerful, yet am loath to exit 2014 on a somber note. I'd suggest resolutions, but, often too broad in scope, they can pave the way to failure, not the yellow brick road to success. Instead, I'll mention four books I read this year that have helped me approach some of the bigger problems—debt, religion, historical disunity—one page at a time.

Anthropologist David Graeber's *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, is a tome I'd ordinarily never open, but once I'd happened into the first few pages, found myself enthralled, from the first myth-breaking information that early societies were not solely barter-based, to the intricacies of the early credit systems of five centuries ago, the first time society became divided into debtors and creditors, finally learning that as gold and silver coin moved in, interest rates rose, and debtors became slaves.

*American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, by historian and journalist Colin Woodard, shows clearly that America has never been a single nation. From the entrenched histories of Woodard's early eleven, (among which are "Yankeedom,"

"Deep South," "El Norte," and "Greater Appalachia"), came the splits and schisms of today. Descendants of these American settlers with diverse religions, politics, and ethnographic characteristics still vie with one another. Knowing some of the whys may help us realize the ongoing antagonisms our descendants will face tomorrow.

Reza Aslan has written two important books: *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* and *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. The first presents a Jesus out of the contexts we're ordinarily taught, while the second examines Mohammed and Islam within the history, social, and religious milieu of his day and beyond. Religious or not, in this shrinking world, it behooves us to know something of the spiritual powers that impel literally billions of believers.

While each of these books was personally rewarding, sometimes the World becomes just too much. On those tired, cold days when my mind slows and optimism wanes, I dip into my Scott Adams collection, and through Dilbert, Wally, et al., confront the Big Questions in a more comforting—and humorous—way. ■



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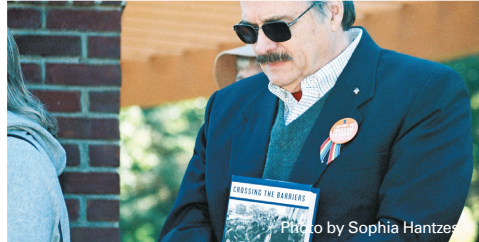
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NOVEMBER 20, 2014



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9pm-2am

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Go all OUT on New Year's Eve with FANTASIA, a gala of fantasy, color, music, high energy, and rampant sexiness. Prepare for the celebration of spectacle at Mill City Nights as the Twin Cities LGBTQ community brings in the New Year with grand intention: In all elegance, bravado, magnificence, and sensuality - Come as the fantastic creature you are... and let's DANCE! Visit [www.millcitynights.com](http://www.millcitynights.com) for more info.

### ICEHOUSE NYE

6:30pm-2am

**Icehouse • 2528 Nicollet Ave. S., Minneapolis**

World-renowned guitarist Tim Sparks is featured for their dinner music, featuring Phil Heywood and Tim O'Keefe! Along with a midnight performance by local heavyweights Rogue Valley! Visit [www.icehousempls.com](http://www.icehousempls.com) for more info.

### NYE @ 19 BAR

**19 W. 15th St., Minneapolis**

Stop on by and enjoy a cocktail to ring in 2015 and send 2014 marching. Champagne toast at midnight. Heated patio. Search 19 Bar on Facebook for more info.

### NYE @ BRASS RAIL

**422 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis**

Head to the Brass Rail for a New Years Eve full of entertainment from our All Male Review, No cover and a Free Champagne toast at Midnight! Have fun and we hope to be ringing in the New Year with all of you! Visit [www.thebrassraillounge.com](http://www.thebrassraillounge.com) for more info.

### NYE @ CAMP BAR

**490 N. Robert St., St. Paul**

This St. Paul nightspot features a great vibe, friendly staff, dancing and cabaret, and that makes Camp Bar a great place to ring in the New Year. Visit [www.camp-bar.net](http://www.camp-bar.net) for more info.

### NYE @ EAGLEBOLTBAR

11am-2am

**eagleBOLTbar • 515 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis**

Open for lunch 11am-2pm. Happy Hour 2pm-6pm 2 for 1's on all drinks. Watch the ball drop on 3 large screens and throughout both bars. Champagne toast at midnight. Visit [www.eagleboltbar.com](http://www.eagleboltbar.com) for more info.

### NYE @ GAY 90'S

**408 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis**

Spectacular Ladies of La Femme show. Free champagne toasts and party favors. With your New Years dinner reservations, get reserved seating in La Femme Show Lounge. Visit [www.gay90s.com](http://www.gay90s.com) for more info.

### NYE @ LUSH

**990 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis**

Ring in 2015 at the hottest spot in NE Minneapolis. With sleek modern décor, exuberant entertainment and eclectic food menu, this is your favorite spot to EAT. DRINK. BE LUSHIOUS. Visit [www.lushfoodbar.com](http://www.lushfoodbar.com) for more info.

### NYE @ THE SALOON

**830 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis**

Dance away the night as we say goodbye to 2014 and hello to 2015. Great music and lots of hot men. Champagne toast at midnight. Visit [www.saloonmn.com](http://www.saloonmn.com) for more info.

### NYE @ THE TOWN HOUSE

**1415 University Ave. W. , St. Paul**

Enjoy NYE in St. Paul with the ever-popular Pumps and Pearls Drag Revue, and celebrate 2015 with a shot toast at midnight. Visit [www.town-housebar.com](http://www.town-housebar.com) for more info.

### NYE'S MUSIC AND MEMORIES AT MATTIE'S

5pm-1am

**Mattie's on Main • 43 Main Street SE**

Amazing views of the river and downtown skyline set the mood for a memorable evening accompanied with the vocals of Miss Erin Schwab. Featuring a 4-course menu for two (variety of menu options) for \$69. Free champagne toast at the stroke of midnight. Visit [www.mattiesonmain.com](http://www.mattiesonmain.com) for more info.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ➔



#### NYE: SPARKLING GERSHWIN TO RING IN THE NEW YEAR

10pm

Orchestra Hall • 1111 Nicollet Mall

A romantic concert on New Year's Eve is a tradition across the globe. This season the Minnesota Orchestra rings in the New Year, led by Music Director Osmo Vänskä and features Grammy Award-winning Sylvia McNair showcasing Gershwin favorites. After-party includes champagne, treats, and a midnight toast by Osmo Vänskä! Visit [www.minnesotaorchestra.org](http://www.minnesotaorchestra.org) for tickets and more info.

#### SOBER NEW YEAR'S EVE

8pm-1am

Twin Cities Leather & Latte • 2717 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis

Part of its continuing mission to support "Community First!", this event will be an alternative to the NYE bar scene, and a way of giving back to the sober communities that support Twin Cities Leather & Latte. Enjoy snacks, games, fellowship, and a sparkling juice toast at midnight. Visit [www.twincitiesleather.com](http://www.twincitiesleather.com) for more info.

#### TWIN CITIES PUB CRAWL ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

Check-in begins at 8:00pm

Mason's Barre & Restaurant • 528 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis

2 rooms, 2 live DJ sets, 2 dance floors, midnight balloon drop and complimentary champagne toast. Tickets: general admission: \$10, VIP all you can drink \$45. They'll be donating three meals to Feeding America for every ticket purchased. Visit [www.masonsmn.com](http://www.masonsmn.com) for more info.

#### NYE PACKAGES

##### NEW BLU YEAR'S PACKAGE

Radisson Blu Mall of America • 2100 Killebrew Dr., Bloomington  
Package includes overnight accommodations in a Superior Guestroom, a bottle of champagne, dinner for two at FireLake Grill House & Cocktail Bar, party hats, \$10 game card to SkyDeck, late check-out, DJ in FireLake from 10pm-1am. Book online at: [www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/new-blu-years-package](http://www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/new-blu-years-package)

##### FAMILY FUN NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

Radisson Blu Mall of America • 2100 Killebrew Dr., Bloomington

Package includes overnight accommodations in a Superior Guestroom, a bottle of champagne, party hats, \$10 game card to SkyDeck, late check-out, DJ in FireLake from 10pm-1am, Indoor Pool open until Midnight. Book online at: [www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/family-new-years-celebration](http://www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/family-new-years-celebration)

##### BLU NEW YEAR'S PACKAGE

Radisson Blu Mall of America • 2100 Killebrew Dr., Bloomington

Package includes overnight accommodations in a Superior Guestroom, a bottle of champagne, party hats, \$10 game card to SkyDeck, late check-out, DJ in FireLake from 10pm-1am. Book online at: [www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/new-years-package](http://www.radissonblu.com/hotel-mall-of-america/hotel-deals/new-years-package) ■



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# YEAR IN REVIEW ● 2014 ●

## PERFORMING ARTS

BY JOHN TOWNSEND

At the end of each year, John Townsend compiles his list of the “Bests” in the theater arts. Congratulations to all the people and companies for your successes, and thank you for making our scene so rich.

### BEST PRODUCTIONS

1. *Colossal*, Mixed Blood Theatre
2. *The Duchess of Malfi*, Classical Actors Ensemble
3. *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities
4. *Rocket to the Moon*, Gremlin Theatre
5. *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*, Pillsbury House Theatre and Mount Curve Company
6. *Dogwood*, Candid Theater Company
7. *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Theatre in the Round Players
8. *Orpheus Descending*, Six Elements Theatre
9. *Crimes of the Heart*, Guthrie Theater
10. (three-way tie) *If We Were Birds*, 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities  
*One Flea Spare*, Theatre Coup d'Etat  
*Vanya and Sonja and Masha and Spike*, Guthrie Theater

### BEST REVIVAL OF A QUEER CLASSIC (tie)

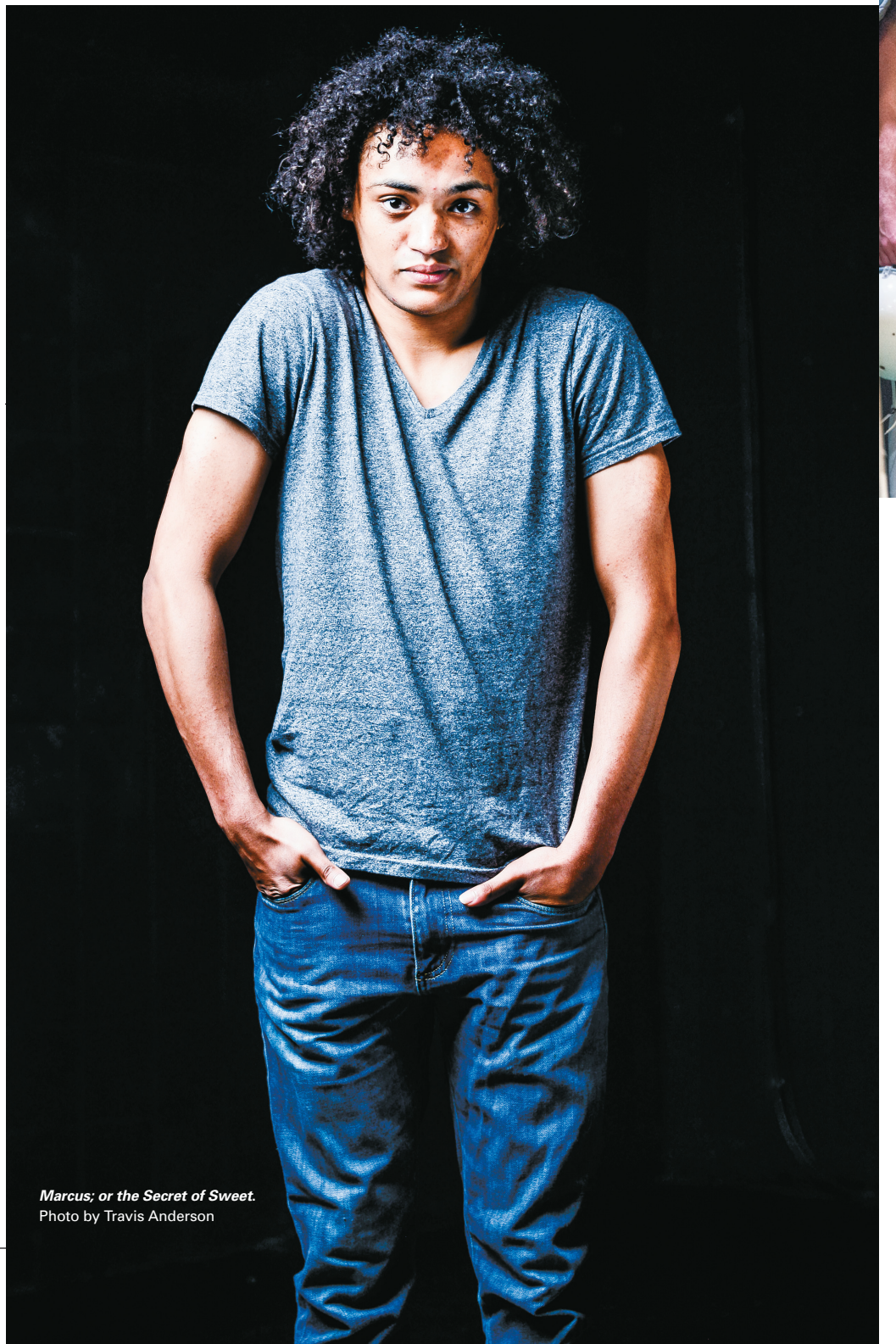
*The Heidi Chronicles*, Guthrie Theater & *Next Fall*, Boom! Theatre

### BEST PRODUCTIONS OF NEW QUEER PLAYS

*Colossal*, Mixed Blood Theatre  
*The Whale*, Walking Shadow Theatre Company



*The Whale*. Photo by Dan Norman



*Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*.  
Photo by Travis Anderson





**Colossal.** Photo by Rich Ryan

**THEATER ARTIST OF THE YEAR  
AND BEST LARGE THEATER  
COSTUME DESIGNER:**

Rich Hamson for *Cabaret*, Theater Latté Da & Hennepin Theatre Trust, *Shrek the Musical*, Children's Theatre Company, *The Little Mermaid* & *Hello Dolly!*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres

**BEST DIRECTION:**

Joseph Papke, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Classical Actors Ensemble

**BEST CHOREOGRAPHY:**

Angharad Davies, *Colossal*, Mixed Blood

**BEST MUSICAL ACTRESS:**

Sally Ann Wright, *Gypsy!*, Bloomington Civic Theatre

**BEST DRAMATIC ACTRESS:**

Jane Froiland, *Rocket to the Moon*, Gremlin Theatre

**BEST COMEDIC ACTRESS:**

Charity Jones, *Sexy Laundry*, Park Square Theatre

**BEST CLASSICAL ACTRESS:**

Ellen Apel, *One Flea Spare*, Theatre Coup d'Etat

**BEST MUSICAL ACTOR:**

Jeff McCarthy, *My Fair Lady*, Guthrie Theater

**BEST DRAMATIC ACTOR:** (tie)

Patrick Scully, *Leaves of Grass Uncut* & Grant Henderson, *1984*, Theatre Pro Rata

**BEST COMEDIC ACTOR:**

John Middleton, *Sexy Laundry*, Park Square Theatre

**BEST CLASSICAL ACTOR:**

Stephen Yoakam, *Othello*, Guthrie Theater



**Grounded.** Photo by Tony Nelson

**BEST SOLO PERFORMANCE:**

Sha Cage, *Grounded*, Frank Theatre

**BEST CROSS-GENDER  
PERFORMANCE:**

Sonja Parks, *Seedfolks*, Children's Theatre Company

**BEST MUSICAL SUPPORTING  
ACTRESS:** (tie)

Cat Brindisi, *Hello Dolly!*, Chanhassen Dinner Theatres & Sally Wingert, *Cabaret*, Theater Latté Da/Hennepin Theatre Trust

**BEST DRAMATIC SUPPORTING  
ACTRESS:**

Katherine Ferrand, *The New Electric Ballroom*, Frank Theatre

**BEST COMEDIC SUPPORTING  
ACTRESS:**

Rachel Finch, *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn*, 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ➔





*Rapture, Blister, Burn.* Photo by Blythe Davis

**BEST CLASSICAL SUPPORTING ACTOR:** (tie)

Lucas Gerstner & Daniel Joeck, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Classical Actors Ensemble

**BEST CHEMISTRY BETWEEN ACTORS:**

Laura Esping & Aditi Kapil, *Gidion's Knot*, Pillsbury House

**LARGE THEATER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR:**

Joe Dowling, Guthrie Theater

**SMALL THEATER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR:**

Claire Avitabile, 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities

**BEST STAGE COMBAT DIRECTION:**

Mike Lubke, *The Beaux' Stratagem*, Theatre in the Round Players

**BEST MUSIC DIRECTION:**

Dennis Curley, *Ring of Fire: The Life and Music of Johnny Cash*, Plymouth Playhouse

**BEST LIGHTING:**

Dietrich Poppen, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Classical Actors Ensemble

**BEST CLASSICAL SUPPORTING ACTRESS:**

Brie Roland, *Miss Julie*, Theatre Coup d'Etat

**BEST MUSICAL SUPPORTING ACTOR:**

Gregory Adam, *Eating Raoul*, Minneapolis Musical Theatre

**BEST DRAMATIC SUPPORTING ACTOR:** (tie)

Craig Johnson, *Rocket to the Moon*, Gremlin Theatre & Brian Columbus, *1984*, Theatre Pro Rata

**BEST COMEDIC SUPPORTING ACTOR:**

Randall J. Funk, *Rapture, Blister, Burn*, 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities



*The Beaux' Stratagem.* Photo by Ron Ravensborg





*The Heidi Chronicles*. Photo by Joan Marcus

**BEST SET DESIGN LARGE THEATER:**

James Youmans, *Crimes of the Heart*, Guthrie Theater

**BEST SET DESIGN SMALL THEATER:** (tie)

Justin Hooper, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Classical Actors Ensemble & Geoffrey M. Curley, *Lake Untersee*, Workhaus Collective

**BEST COSTUME DESIGN SMALL THEATER:**

Lori Opsal, *Schiller's Mary Stuart*, Walking Shadow Theatre Company

**BEST WIG & HAIRSTYLES:**

Laura Adams, *The Heidi Chronicles*, Guthrie Theater

**BEST SOUND DESIGN:**

C. Andrew Meyer, *Lake Untersee*, Workhaus Collective

**BEST ORIGINAL MUSIC:**

Charlie McCarron, *Ghost Sonata*, Nimbus Theatre

**OUTSTANDING NEW PLAYWRITING:**

Seraphina Nova, *Dogwood*, Candid Theatre

**OUTSTANDING NEW MUSICAL COLLABORATION:**

Christina Campanella & Stephanie Fleischmann, *The Secret Lives of Coats*

**OUTSTANDING NEW POLITICAL PLAYWRITING:**

Marisa Carr, *Reconciliation*, Intermedia Arts & Pangea World Theater

**OUTSTANDING NEW CHILDREN'S PLAYWRITING:**

Jeffrey Hatcher, *The Scarecrow and His Servant*, Children's Theatre Company

**BEST SHOWS FROM OUT OF TOWN:**

*Tristan & Yseult*, Kneehigh Theatre, UK at the Guthrie Theater

*The Room Nobody Knows*, Niwa Gekidan Penino, Japan at Walker Art Center

*The Gershwins' "Porgy and Bess" & Nice Work If You Can Get It*, National Tours, Ordway Center

**BEST PERFORMANCES FROM OUT OF TOWN:**

Thomas Vincent Kelly & Sal Viscuso, *A Steady Rain*, Odyssey Theatre Ensemble of Los Angeles at the Guthrie ■



*The Duchess of Malfi*. Photo by Zach Curtis



# YEAR IN REVIEW ● 2014 ●

ON THE RECORD

BY ED HUYCK

Lots of music came out in 2014. Plenty have passed through one ear and out the other, but some of it did stick. Below are some of those albums that stayed in my head throughout the past year.

# 10

(Well, 11)

FAVORITES FROM  
2014



**PRINCE**

## *Plectrumelectrum and Art Official Age*

The Purple One looks to be back for real, with a pair of albums that would fit into his glory days releases. *Plectrumelectrum* shows the rocking side of Prince, while *Art Official Age* brings out spacey pop. Both are brilliant.



**JEREMY MESSERSMITH**

## *Heart Murmurs*

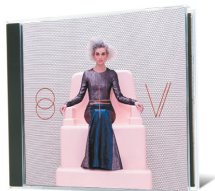
The Minnesota fave returned in early 2014 with an album loaded to the gills with confidence, merging tight playing and song writing with Messersmith's signature, off-kilter view of life.



**THE TEMPLES**

## *Sun Structures*

Young Englishmen turn the clock back to 1971 for a trippy set of tunes. Plenty of acts have done that over the decades, but Temples also brought a strong set of songs to go with the sonic phasers and psychedelic moments.



**ST. VINCENT**

## *St. Vincent*

After an intriguing side album with David Byrne, Annie Clark went back on her own for a tremendous set of mature pop and rock music.





**HALEY BONAR**  
*Last War*

It's easy to feel some contact pride over this former Minnesota resident's success, but *Last War* is also an album of beautifully honed music that hides heartbreak beneath the surface.



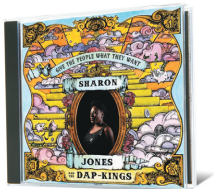
**SONNY KNIGHT AND THE LAKERS**  
*I'm Still Here*

It took Sonny Knight decades of personal and musical struggle to finally get his debut album together. The local soul and R&B singer made good here, celebrating in a distinctly Minnesota way on tunes like "Juicy Lucy."



**TICKLE TORTURE**  
*Spectrophilia*

Elliott Koziel loves hot and sweaty sex—at least, that's what it sounds like on this heavy-breathing EP.



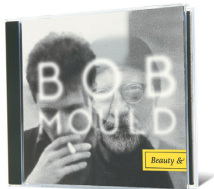
**SHARON JONES AND THE DAP KINGS**  
*Give the People What They Want*

Jones roared back from a cancer diagnosis in 2013 with this collection of self-assured soul that continued to keep the traditions of old-time soul alive.



**FKA TWIGS**  
*LP1*

In a live setting, she can certainly command the house, and that extends to this debut album, which heralds a strong new voice on the music scene.



**BOB MOULD**  
*Beauty and Ruin*

Bob Mould is definitely not a new voice, but years deep into his second career renaissance, the former Husker Du/Sugar frontman continues to issue effortlessly great, raging collections of tunes.

**10**  
**MORE ALBUMS**  
**Worth the Time From 2014**

**BECK**  
*Morning Phase*

**THE WAR ON DRUGS**  
*Lost in the Dream*

**PHANTOGRAM**  
*Voices*

**DAMON ALBARN**  
*Everyday Robots*

**AGAINST ME!**  
*Transgender Dysphoria Blues*

**JACK WHITE**  
*Lazaretto*

**BENJAMIN BOOKER**  
*Benjamin Booker*

**THE BLACK KEYS**  
*Turn Blue*

**HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH**  
New Cast Recording

**TRAMPLED BY TURTLES**  
*Wild Animals*

**Album from late 2013 that would have been on that list, except for deadlines:**

**BEYONCÉ**  
*Beyoncé*

**Just Don't...**  
**U2**

*Songs of Innocence*  
Bad enough that U2 decided to unleash this mediocre set of tunes on the world, but forcing the entire globe (at least those with an iTunes account) to have to listen to the likes of "The Miracle (Of Joey Ramone)" and "The Troubles" was just cruel.

**Massive Reissue That Takes the Better Part of a Day to Listen to:**

**BOB DYLAN**  
*Bootleg Series #11: The Complete Basement Tapes*

Dylan and the soon-to-be Band rock out near Woodstock, with both emerging on the other end as changed artists. It's a tremendous, exhaustive set that will keep any Dylan-phile busy through the winter.

**The Greatest of Greatest Hits Collections:**

**DAVID BOWIE**  
*Nothing Has Changed*

It's not hard to put together a hits set for Bowie, but most in the past have focused on his glory days from *Space Oddity* to *Scary Monsters*. These three discs move backwards in time, proving that while his whole career hasn't been as consistent as those years, the highlights from 45 years of music making stand up. ■



# YEAR IN REVIEW ● 2014 ●

FOOD

BY JOY SUMMERS



Monkfish, Heyday. Photo by Hubert Bonnet; Heyday Interior. Photo by Joy Summers; Travail Kitchen & Amusements. Photo courtesy of Travail & The Rookery

## BEST OF NEW RESTAURANTS

The January sleet was merciless. Actually, I'm not certain it was January. The entirety of last winter felt like a January, but it was disgustingly, brutally, irritatingly cold as I shuffled inside Chef Shack Ranch. A blast of warm

air and brisket perfume immediately began to thaw an ice-hardened anger I'd worked up. The outside might have been a hail of frozen everything, but inside was a hearth of hospitality. The hearty food and a velvety bottle of wine was enough to fortify me for a few more months of winter.

Last year there was an unprecedented number of restaurant openings. It's crazy to think about the next few that will be opening in 2015,

but for now, as the calendar winds down, I'm going to try to hold onto the contentment that these great meals gave me for just a bit longer.

There was finally promise of spring when Heyday opened. I immediately collected five Fonzie cool points just by walking through the door and perching beneath the brick wall adorned with a Replacements quote. Lorin Zinter welcomed me warmly. Britt Tracy poured me a just-bitter-enough bourbon drink.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ➔



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photo: Kelly Loverud



## ●2014● YEAR IN REVIEW — FOOD

I was excited to taste Jim Christiansen's creations, uninfluenced by outside sources for the first time in his career. A dish of cold mussels was the edible embodiment of spring. Later in the year, he busted out a rabbit dish that I will crown the best plate of food of the year. I've had it more since and it's just as good warm in the restaurant over a perfectly lit evening with low, soothing conversation as it is cool on a tiny plate at the Share Our Strength event. Succulent rabbit is draped in a carrot caramel: perfect, simple, and astonishing. Sweet, salty, savory, fatty, crisp layers of flavor build to culinary climax time and again.

Meanwhile, I found myself more than once (still in January, I think...my god, it was cold) in Robbinsdale, dining at **Travail Kitchen and Amusements** and **The Rookery**. This merry band of chefs proved that they are more than just the crazy concept-wielding guys who can't resist a pop-up. This is a team of chefs that welcomes other talents and hard work, and turn out wildly inventive dishes to explore like menu *Jumanji*. The description might simply say "egg" and the deft modernist cuisine will likely serve a playful plate of something that only once resembled a humble ovum, but tastes like none other. It's hard not to stifle a giggle. Since opening they have also added a brunch service and launched several pop-ups to highlight the talents of many of the other chefs on the team. It's likely that inside these walls lurk much of the talent we will be following closely for years to come.

But a girl can't live on fine dining alone. Well, not this one (and my budget). That's why I was thrilled to meet up with Jack Riebel inside St. Paul's beloved dive bar, **Half Time Rec**. The new kitchen concept from him and the guys behind Smack Shack takes hearty Irish fare and bumps it up to mythic levels. At **Paddy Shack** are fries (aka chips) and burgers to banish all hangovers. Here is a brunch (more lunch than breakfast) served with a beer that will save you from any demons possibly invoked the night before.

For higher-on-the-shelf drinks, but just about the same amount of money, there is also **Hola Arepa** to consider. This is the only place I think of whose opening felt



(Clockwise from top) **Agnolotti** from **Travail Kitchen & Amusements**. Photo by Austin Lindstrom; **Hola Arepa Bar**. Photo by Joy Summers; **Paddy Shack, Shack Burger**. Photo by Joy Summers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ➔



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## ●2014● YEAR IN REVIEW — FOOD



(From left) **Spoon and Stable** kitchen action. Photo by Joy Summers; **Saffron's** cocktails. Photo by Hubert Bonnet

tropical rather than sub-arctic. I love everything about this bright and beautiful restaurant and the myriad of ingredients shoved into those tender, fluffy dough cakes. Earlier this week I sampled a special of porchetta, crispy belly wrapped around tender pork tossed with a creamy, ginger-spiked slaw and augmented with a habanero chili sauce that I became instantly, dangerously addicted to. While I knew I was happy to eat up any of Christina Nguyen's creations, or sip any drink served by Birk Grudem (or their disarmingly charming bar manager, Dan Oskey), I was thoroughly unprepared to fall so hard and fast for the desert menu. Heather Kim made this Hot Cheeto brittle that is basically edible crack in a bag. I don't even like Cheetos. You haven't indulged a salty-loving sweet tooth until you've devoured her lusciously creamy chess pie. These guys are killing it on every level and the top entrée price lands around \$12.

It's also never been a better time to drink in the Twin Cities. **The Torpedo Room** at **Eat Street Social** has reopened with cocktails to blow your skirt up. Nikola Govich is running a beauty of a bar program at **Saffron**. Adam Gorski is shining like a dimpled diamond over at **La Belle Vie**. The same guys who have served at Parlour and coup d'état are leading a pre-bottled cocktail program at **Marché** that is delightful to sip through. The new brandy program at **The Bachelor Farmer** introduces a new breed of brown to end a meal with. For those looking for a break from imbibing, which even I have to admit to doing every now and again, **Five Watt Coffee** is serving these latté drinks that I actually proposed to the first time I tasted them. They shall be my sipper-wives.

Lastly, there was this guy, Gavin Kaysen, and a little joint called **Spoon and Stable**. A lauded New York City chef, he baffled all of Manhattan by deciding to walk away from the

Big Apple for our mini one. I've had precious few tastes of the menu, but so far the guy is living up to the hype. That the restaurant team is stocked with some magnificent local talent like Diane Yang, Robb Jones, and Bill Summerville doesn't hurt. While early reservations might be tough to get, the bar is available for walk-ins and Jones is bringing back the Cosmopolitan. I'd almost forgotten how much fun those were to drink. Add in a duck and foie meatloaf sandwich and color me tickled.

It's been a delicious 10 months of January. We're so lucky to have these guys to keep us warmed from the inside out. ■

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# YEAR IN REVIEW ● 2014 ●

## BEST OF LAVENDER

BY SHANE LUECK

Each year the Minnesota Magazine Publishing Association (MMPA) presents its Excellence Awards, recognizing outstanding publishing achievements. The awards include dozens of categories in the areas of editorial, design, marketing, digital publishing, and overall excellence. All entries for this year's awards have a cover date between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014. Winners were announced at the annual awards gala held this year on November 13. Lavender is proud to present its twelve MMPA Excellence Award winners this year.



### GOLD - FROM THE EDITOR

**"Born This Way"**  
**by Andy Lien**  
Issue 495  
May 15, 2014

As editor, Andy Lien looks through all of *Lavender's* content from the summer of 2013 through the summer of 2014 to determine what to submit for the MMPA Excellence Awards. "It's a wonderful reminder of what good writing and articles we've had throughout 26 issues, by our columnists and contributors as well as myself," Lien says. "Getting two awards for the two pieces I submitted feels so good; it makes me want to push myself harder and farther. There's nothing like success to drive improvement: last year, this year, next year."

### BRONZE - FROM THE EDITOR

**"Love: In Sickness & In Health"**  
**by Andy Lien**  
Issue 487  
January 23, 2014



### SILVER - REGULAR COLUMN

**"Playing for the Other Team"**  
**by Nell Gelhaus**

"I was absolutely humbled and excited to hear about the awards," Gelhaus says. She began writing her column in January 2014 hasn't slowed down since. Bringing a sense of wit and ease to her column, Gelhaus is a truly humble writer. She says, "Honestly, I'm still surprised that people are even reading my column, so I'm very appreciative."





## GOLD - PROFILE ARTICLE

**"Modern Family"**  
by **Shane Lueck**  
with Brett Dorrian, Photography  
Issue 494  
May 1, 2014

It takes courage to let someone into your life and share your story with unknown readers. "Chris and Anders (along with their son, Hugo) opened their doors whole-heartedly and were more than willing to let me into their life," Lueck says. "Their story speaks for itself and is a reflection of their open and caring nature. I'm just thankful that I was able to do their story justice."



## SILVER - PROFILE ARTICLE

**"The Women of Wise Acre Eatery"**  
by **Joy Summers**  
Issue 497  
June 12, 2014

Joy Summers brings readers along her culinary journey with her food articles, so who better to profile the women who brought us Wise Acre Eatery? "As wonderful as it is to be recognized for my writing, this article is born of a love that is not my own," says Summers. "Caroline and Beth of Wise Acres Eatery shared their story with me and I was given the gift of sharing it with our readers."



## GOLD - HOW-TO ARTICLE

**"Halloween How To"**  
by **Brett Dorrian** with Morgan Ross  
and Andy Lien  
Issue 480  
October 17, 2013

Multiple photo shoots, each with intensive costuming and make up could easily go awry. But with the guidance of Brett Dorian, the piece turned out beautifully. "The how-to article was a tremendous group effort to pull together talent and communities from around the Twin Cities to bring some pop-culture trends to the mainstream for Halloween," Dorian says. "It was a pleasure to lead the special effects design team for my studio, write for the article, and shoot a couple of the pieces."



## SILVER - HOW-TO ARTICLE

**"How to Plan a Wedding  
(Without Getting a Divorce)"**  
by **Nell Gelhaus**  
Issue 491  
March 20, 2014

Writing about loved ones is always a rocky path, dodging bullets and making sure to say the right thing. Gelhaus has perfected the art. She says, "Apparently people like to read about me making fun of my wife, so I'll be sure to tell her that when she starts to complain too much. *What was that dumb thing you said a few minutes ago? I have to write it down. Honey, this is for the magazine!*"



**SILVER - SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE, SPECIAL SECTION, OR SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT**  
**Spring 2014 Wedding Issue**  
Issue 491  
March 20, 2014



**BRONZE - COVER DESIGN**  
**Spring 2014 Wedding Issue**  
Issue 491  
March 20, 2014



**BRONZE - FEATURE DESIGN**  
**2014 New Restaurant Guide & Preview**  
Issue 493  
April 17, 2014



**BRONZE - OVERALL MAGAZINE DESIGN**



**BRONZE - MEDIA KIT**



# YEAR IN REVIEW

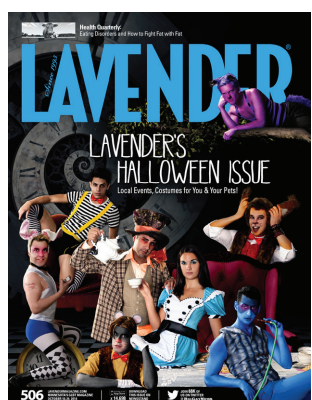
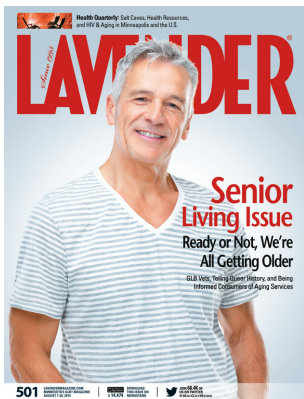
# ● 2014 ●

## YEAR IN COVERS

**A YEAR RECORDED BY  
ITS COVERS, HERE ARE  
ALL 26 LAVENDER  
COVERS OF 2014**









# YEAR IN REVIEW

# 2014

## TOP STORIES

### LAVENDER'S TOP PRINT-EDITION STORIES OF 2014

#### 1. Q & A WITH JAIYAH SAEUA, OF "NEXT GOAL WINS"

by Nell Gelhaus  
Issue 493  
April 17, 2014

Nell Gelhaus' column, "Playing for the Other Team," premiered in January 2014. In one of her first pieces for the column, Nell interviewed Jaiyah Saelua, a member of Samoa's recognized and accepted third gender, the *fa'afafine*, and player for the Samoan national soccer team.



#### 4. ORANGETHEORY FITNESS: MAXIMUM WORKOUT, MAXIMUM RESULTS

by Kathleen Watson  
Issue 488  
February 6, 2014

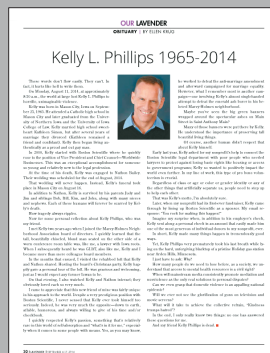
Kathleen Watson gave new life to New Year's resolutions with her profile of Orangetheory Fitness. Perhaps it was because the staff at Orangetheory create fitness programs unique to the individual.



#### 2. OBITUARY: KELLY L. PHILLIPS 1965-2014

by Ellie Krug  
Issue 503  
September 4, 2014

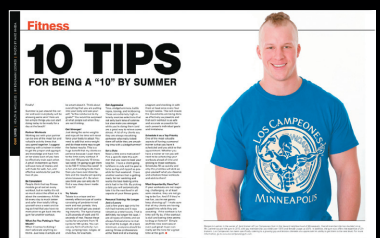
August 11 saw the arrival of devastating news for the GLBT community: the death of Kelly Phillips. In an obituary, Ellie Krug immortalized her beloved friend.



#### 5. 10 TIPS FOR BEING A "10" BY SUMMER

by Benjamin Loehr  
Issue 492  
April 3, 2014

We all have dreams of being in better shape by the time "bikini season" rolls around. Thanks to these tips by the owner of Los Campeones Gym, many people made those dreams a reality.



#### 3. RIDE REVIEW: 2014 HONDA ACCORD HYBRID

by Randy Stern  
Issue 488  
February 6, 2014

Readers of the magazine are no stranger to Randy Stern's Ride Review column. But readers flocked to his review of the 2014 Honda Accord Hybrid, named one of the 10 Best Green Cars of 2014 by Kelley Blue Book.





**6. MODERN FAMILY: CHRIS, ANDERS, & HUGO**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 494  
May 1, 2014

Chris, Anders, and Hugo stole hearts in their profile as part of the magazine's Our Lavender Family set of features. Their journey to become a family is unique to them, but resonated with countless readers.



**7. THE CURB APPEAL OF JOHN GIDDING**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 489  
February 20, 2014

John Gidding draws in audiences from across the nation as part of the HGTV family, but this profile chronicled his interesting path to his dream career.



**8. RED COW: EXPANDING THE HERD TO ST. PAUL**  
by Pat Evans  
Issue 502  
August 21, 2014

Red Cow crossed the river with a second location in St. Paul, met by the applause of the eatery's many fans. Pat Evans brought Red Cow's new concoctions to the forefront of everyone's mind...and stomach!



**9. 2014 LAVENDER COMMUNITY AWARDS**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 505  
October 2, 2014

Lavender is thrilled to honor the movers and shakers of the GLBTA community every year. And, every year, the list of award winners is embraced and celebrated by the community.



**10. WEDDING VENUES: NEW AND RENEWED**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 481  
October 31, 2013

This 2013 article received new life as people began planning 2014 ceremonies and were looking for what's new (and renewed!) in the world of venues. Due to the article's warm reception, *Lavender* began covering venues more intensely, with profiles and in-depth looks at what is available for GLBT weddings.



## HONORABLE MENTIONS:

**11. A WEDDING STORY: BEN MEENTS & CHET RITCHIE**  
by Emma Meents  
Issue 507  
October 30, 2014

**12. OUR LAVENDER FAMILY: KAJA AND BETSY - MOMS KNOW BEST**  
by Kathleen Watson  
Issue 497  
June 12, 2014

**13. HOW TO PLAN YOUR WEDDING (WITHOUT GETTING A DIVORCE)**  
by Nell Gelhaus  
Issue 491  
March 20, 2014

**14. WORSHIP: WALKING THE TALK: LOCAL CHURCHES EMBRACE NEW MINISTERS**  
by Pam Colby  
Issue 484  
December 12, 2013

**15. THROUGH THESE EYES: CHRISTMAS FOR LONERS**  
by Justin Jones  
Issue 483  
November 27, 2013

**16. LAVENDER CLASS OF 2014**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 494  
May 1, 2014

**17. IN STYLE: MEET MAYDA**  
by Shane Lueck  
Issue 492  
April 3, 2014

**18. SKATING THE WAY TO HAPPINESS**  
by Justin Reis  
Issue 486  
January 9, 2014

**19. PUSH YOUR LIMITS WITH AX FITNESS**  
by Kathleen Watson  
Issue 492  
April 3, 2014

**20. LAV.FASH - WHAT SHOULD BE: FROM THE LIPS OF GRANT WHITTAKER**  
by Justin Jones & Brandon McCray  
Issue 504  
September 18, 2014



# YEAR IN REVIEW ● 2014 ●

## TOP STORIES

### LAVENDER'S TOP ONLINE-ONLY STORIES OF 2014

#### 1. ONLINE MAGAZINE

Readers, whether local or from overseas, tune into the online edition of *Lavender* for a dynamic reading experience whether or not there's a print edition available.



#### 2. BIG GAY NEWS

Culminating the latest in GLBT world news, Big Gay News provides both editorial content and a daily podcast. This global news source has a Twitter following of nearly 70,000. Find your Big Gay News at @biggaynews.



#### 3. RIDE REVIEW: 2015 HONDA FIT by Randy Stern August 15, 2014

Between print editions, Randy Stern has been known to offer an online-only Ride Review every now and again. His take on the 2015 Honda Fit had readers saying, "Yes, please!"



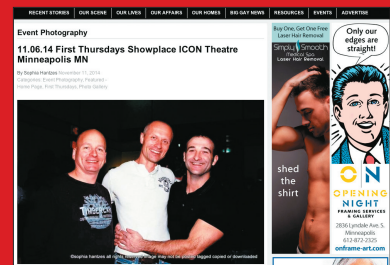
#### 5. LAV.FASH: FASHION BEACH PARTY - SEXY IN THE TWIN CITIES FASHION SHOW

by Justin Jones & Brandon McCray  
April 22, 2014

This fashion show couldn't have come at a better time; Minnesotans were ready for a taste of warm weather and sunshine. Lav.fash's interview with the creative director and stylist for the show had readers dreaming of summer.

#### 4. EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY

Moving swiftly, *Lavender* makes the rounds to a remarkable number of GLBT events in the Twin Cities. Uploaded online shortly after, event photography continues to be a highlight of *Lavender's* online presence.





## 6. SPELLBINDING REVIVAL OF A TENNESSEE WILLIAMS CLASSIC by John Townsend January 16, 2014

Many tune in to see John Townsend's take on local theater. His review of *Orpheus Descending* hailed the performance of a group of young actors performing a classic work with a profound depth of understanding.



## 7. 20% THEATRE CONTINUES ITS INQUIRY INTO THE COMPLEXITY OF GENDER by John Townsend February 14, 2014

With a look into 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities' series of 25 short stage pieces created by 20% artists, John Townsend highlighted local perspectives that pushed the current ideas of gender. As he said, "So many different views are being presented, that you might call it an example of the democratization of performing arts."



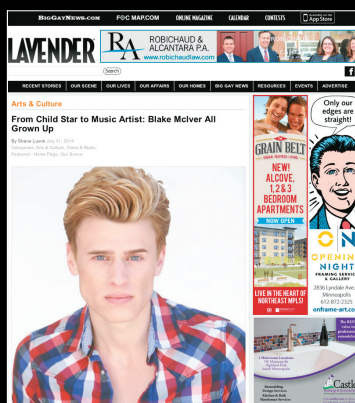
## 9. YOUNG "GODSPELL" CAST FINDS THE JOY AND BEAUTY AT THEATRE IN THE ROUND by John Townsend July 22, 2014

One of theater's oldest and most beloved musicals found new life in the cast at Theatre in the Round. The vocalists and musicians did the story justice while raising it to new heights.



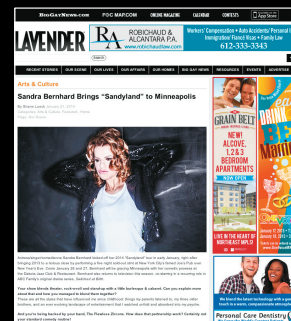
## 8. FROM CHILD STAR TO MUSIC ARTIST: BLAKE MCIVER ALL GROWN UP by Shane Lueck July 31, 2014

In a bit of blast-from-the-past nostalgia, child star Blake McIver (of *Full House* and *The Little Rascals* fame), released a CD and came forward with his coming out journey.



## 10. SANDRA BERNHARD BRINGS "SANDYLAND" TO MINNEAPOLIS by Shane Lueck January 21, 2014

Whether you know Sandra Bernhard from *Roseanne*, *Switched at Birth*, or countless other credits to her name, you know her brand of humor. When her touring comedy act came to Minneapolis, readers loved the chance to get inside her mind with this interview.







Detroit skyline. Photo by Vito Palmisano

# Detroit 2014

## THE COME BACK CHAMP

Shovels in the ground for a new light rail route. Also a rink for professional hockey. Urban hipsters vying for condos in once-blighted neighborhoods. A riverfront promenade voted among America's Top Ten. Bold-name chefs lured to the city core. Tourists snagging reservations. Chicago? New Orleans? Think again.

Detroit.

Really.

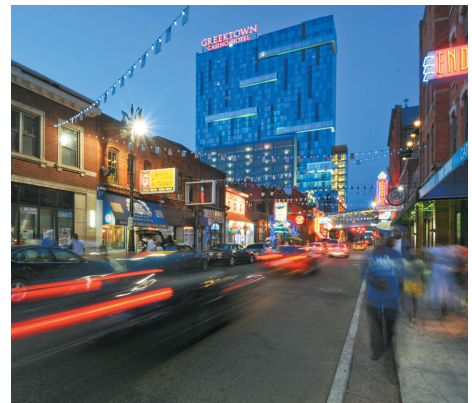
Yes, the city not long ago threatened with bankruptcy has emerged from those financial ashes with new muscle and a vibrant can-do spirit. Credited in no small part for reviving its fortunes is Dan Gilbert, CEO of Quicken, the lending institution, who bought 60—count 'em, 60—of the downtown's threatened buildings to secure their future. And that future is shiny, with occupancy rates north of 90 percent today.

The Detroit Institute of Arts, once threatened with selling off its masterpieces to pay city bills, has launched a new display program that

encourages viewers to climb into the painter's brain to explore beyond "pretty." Compare, for instance, two Madonna painters from the same century, one Italian, one Dutch, conveyed vastly different messages—one like photo-realism, one serene and static. Or, how about Baroque Art as Theater, with grand poses struck, spotlighted amid deep shadows? Or the socio-economic statement of Diego Rivera's ta-da! murals of Detroit's industry in the '30s, a montage of muscular workers à la saints in the Sistine Chapel.

The DIA is one of three most-visited sites in the city, along with the Henry Ford Plant, birthplace of the Model T, and the birth of Detroit's musical footprint, the Motown Museum. "You stepped into history!" screams our über-enthusiastic Motown guide. "Gonna get some dancin' out?" It's here where Berry Gordy served as messiah for Detroit's young black musicians, shepherding them through instruction, not only in harmony and choreography ("The Temptations' walk"), but also the





(From left) **Detroit Motown Museum.** Photo courtesy of Visit Detroit; **Detroit Riverfront; Greektown.** Photos by Vito Palmisano

social graces to grease their way to fame; seven years from start-up to a multi-million dollar business shipping to record stores (think artists like Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, and the list goes on).

The Museum of African American History, a block from the DIA, leads up to the Motown story. It traces the story from captivity and transport from Africa as visitors climb below-deck on a slave ship to encounter crowded, shackled “bodies,” then emerge onto America’s auction blocks (“Can I hear \$25 for this woman and her baby?”) and plantation conditions—including uprisings—and Detroit’s own Underground Railway, headquartered in a church around the corner. It’s here that Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his first “I Have a Dream” speech. Detroit elected its first black mayor, ahead of the rest of the country, in 1974.

On the waterfront, cannons are aimed at Canada, across the water. There’s also a statue group of escaped slaves crossing the water to freedom. Today that riverwalk—home base of the city’s annual free jazz festival Labor Day weekend—leads past General Motors’ world headquarters, the towering Renaissance Center, to parks like Rivard Plaza, with Adirondack chairs, volleyball court, bike rental, and a merry-go-round featuring native steeds like frogs and herons. And beyond it, Corktown, once home of Irish immigrants escaping the potato famine, is emerging from its gritty roots as a hot new center of urban hip, flush with coffeehouses, bars, cafés like Slows Barbecue with its hours-long line, the new Two James Distillery (tours and samples), and vintage shops dotting the cute frame homes snapped up by millennials for less than the price of a condo.

Midtown is another revival success, drawing the “Ed and Meds” from Wayne State University and Detroit’s premier hospital to snazzy new townhomes for this “yoga and yogurt” crowd of urbanites with shopping opportunities like City Bird and sister store, Nest (with “D” beeswax candles, Michigan-logo sunglasses and cookie cutters, onesies, and “Say Nice Things About Detroit” mugs). Across the street, Willys Detroit flaunts must-have casual duds, while nearby Shinola, in its world

HQ, peddles its iconic bikes, leather goods, and watches (Bill Clinton reportedly purchased 15) and necessities like designer thumbtacks and handmade string. Close by, Motor City Brewery Works and Winery and Hopcat Pub hydrate trendsters.

New core-city condos are everywhere, but it’s downtown’s iconic architecture from the Golden Twenties that turns heads, from those pre-Depression movie palaces like the Fox and Fillmore ogling the stone tigers guarding Comerica Field and lions at Ford Field, to towers like the Guardian of 1929, designed in breathtaking Art Deco Aztec style, along with Tiffany clocks and jewel-bright mosaics at the elevator stands. Today, lounge in the former bank lobby, enjoying a coffee while you gape.

Good eats have returned, too, yours to enjoy at Roast, where superchef Michael Symon, snagged from Cleveland, serves mega-meat, starting with sweetbreads, pork belly, beef cheek pierogies, and pigs’ tails to chops, steaks, and the hit of the evening, short ribs (from a brontosaurus, by the looks of them). The Top of the Ponch surpasses its superb city view with a vanguard menu, ranging from smoked shellfish soup to stuffed sea urchin starters to lamb shanks with pierogi and parsnips, monkfish with crispy Brussels sprouts, asparagus, and turnip purée to a New York strip sided with chai-infused wild mushrooms and rutabaga clouds.

But I bet you’re hungry for a side of music with your eats. Then streak to the Majestic, a temple of burger-to-crab-cake-to-beet-salad fare aside a bowling alley with nightly jazz. Or Bert’s, a fixture of the revered Eastern Market (Tuesday and Saturday mornings), where wings and ribs are the stars, aside a performance stage. It’s where the stars of *Motown the Musical* (coming to Minneapolis in December) hang out after hours. And at Baker’s Keyboard Lounge, serving tunes and treats for 80 years, listen up while you gobble fried catfish or ribs with two sides. For info, [www.visitdetroit.com](http://www.visitdetroit.com). ■

## DETROIT'S GAYBORHOODS

Welcome to Ferndale, boasting “the largest per-capita gay population in the country,” according to Cassandra Varner. “There’s no other place like this!” Cass attests, as we tour the Detroit neighborhood where she serves as director of communications at Affirmations, its iconic GLBT community center. Anchoring its site on 9 Mile Road, the main drag, since 2007, it offers a rainbow of services, including advocacy, health and wellness, fitness and recreation, growth and development, and cultural/social programs: art gallery, café, film nights, cyber center, library, gym, teens’ game room, and more. Programs range from film nights to married men’s support group, transgender life support, seniors’ kaffee klatch, choir, yoga, lesbian card games night, and a softball league ([www.goaffirmations.org](http://www.goaffirmations.org)).

There’s a young, urban vibe on the streets of neighboring Royal Oak, too, born of scads of gay-owned businesses, ranging from Pronto Café (oh, those cupcakes!) to Five15, a gift shop sponsoring weekend Drag Queen Bingo that sells out months in advance ([www.FIVE15.net](http://www.FIVE15.net)).

And talk about Pride! Motor City Pride is held downtown in June, while Ferndale’s own Pride is a June must, too. Black Pride, held in a city park, (“like a family reunion—totally fun!” says Cass) is the last weekend of July. For info, visit [www.pridesource.com](http://www.pridesource.com).



## OUR SCENE

BAR & CLUBS | BAROMETER | BY GEORGE HOLDGRAFER

# Legendary Chi Chi LaRue Coming Home for the Holidays

On December 20 at the EagleBOLTBar in Downtown Minneapolis, the legendary Chi Chi LaRue continues a holiday tradition in the Twin Cities. Chi Chi LaRue's XXXmas: All I Want for Christmas Is a Puppy features the superstar DJ spinning in the Bolt, plus special guest Tony Orion.

A native of Hibbing, Minnesota, LaRue launched her career as a popular female impersonator in the Twin Cities in the late 1970s before moving to Los Angeles in 1986. This year, LaRue is celebrating her 25th anniversary of being the world's most famous gay adult video director, having helmed hundreds of productions. LaRue's C1R (Channel 1 Releasing) is the world's largest gay adult video company. LaRue's third and latest incarnation is performing as an internationally much-in-demand DJ. *Out* magazine named LaRue one of its Top 50 "Most Powerful Gay Men and Women in America."

Be there early for Chi Chi LaRue's XXXmas, because the event, as always, undoubtedly will attract a capacity crowd. ■

### CHI CHI LARUE'S XXXMAS

Dec. 20  
EagleBOLTBar  
515 Washington Ave. S., Mpls.  
www.eagleboltbar.com  
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Chi Chi LaRue. Photo courtesy of Chi Chi LaRue

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# Children & Family



## FINDING “HAPPILY EVER AFTER”

It's a tale as old as time: Once upon a time...at a Cher concert...

Kent and Diego Love-Ramirez were sitting in adjacent rows of the “nose-bleed section,” each with their own group of friends when they met. The concert ended without an exchange of contact information, both assuming that was the end, they would go their separate ways never to be heard from again.

The end? Shortest fairy tale of all time!

Except there must have been some sort of fairy godmother looking over them because they ended up at the same club that night. Yet once again, the evening ended without the exchange of information.

“Diego was in town for the concert and, as we were leaving the club, his friend hol-lered out the name of the hotel where they were staying,” Kent says. In an act that some might call a tad bit stalker, Kent made a move by heading to that hotel. “I took a chance, found

his car based on its out-of-state license plate, and put my phone number under his wiper.”

Diego called the following day, the two set a date for dinner the following week, and have been together ever since.

That was October 2002. Cut to Christmas Eve 2005. He opened his last present—a box containing the foam outline of a cross-shaped ornament—and was instantly thrown. “Kent sent me on a scavenger hunt to find my final present,” Diego says. He looked up to the

tree and found the ornament, placed in the middle of the tree and holding two rings. “He got down on one knee and said, ‘Would you do me the honor of spending the rest of your life with me?’ And I said yes.”

Two years later on December 1, 2007, Kent and Diego had an intimate religious ceremony at the Michigan State University Alumni Chapel surrounded by family and close friends. Their simple ceremony consisted of parents walking them down the aisle, their sisters standing with



them as part of a small wedding party, along with their two best friends. At the time, they were attending a Catholic church and weren't able to have their ceremony at their parish.

Kent, born and raised in Michigan, has always lived within a 30-minute drive of parents, siblings, and large extended family. Diego is from Albuquerque and came to Michigan for aviation school. "He never intended to stay in Michigan," Kent says, "but we had an immediate and authentic connection, especially related to our core values, commitment to family, and hope for our future."

Since the ceremony was not recognized as a legal marriage in Michigan—and still isn't—the couple flew to Washington, DC, with their best man—their son, Lucas—to make their marriage legal on December 7, 2012, beneath what Diego calls "a tacky trellis of fake flowers" at the county courthouse.

Diego says, "We view the 2007 ceremony as our 'wedding day,' but it was a wonderful moment when we made it legal in 2012, and all the more special to have our son with us."

Lucas was born nearly two years earlier, on New Year's Day of 2011. Working with a small adoption agency in Michigan, Kent and Diego were selected as one of five prospective couples by Lucas' birth parents. "Ultimately they selected us, and we were fortunate to be included during the pregnancy at doctor's appointments and in the delivery room," Diego says. "We both were there when Lucas took his first breaths. I cut the umbilical cord. Kent was the first one to hold him. We left the hospital with him to begin our new life as a family."

Kent adds, "Lucas is such a blessing. He is a happy, loving kid who is wonderfully inquisitive, imaginative, and easygoing, which makes it possible for us to be out and about, exploring as a family."

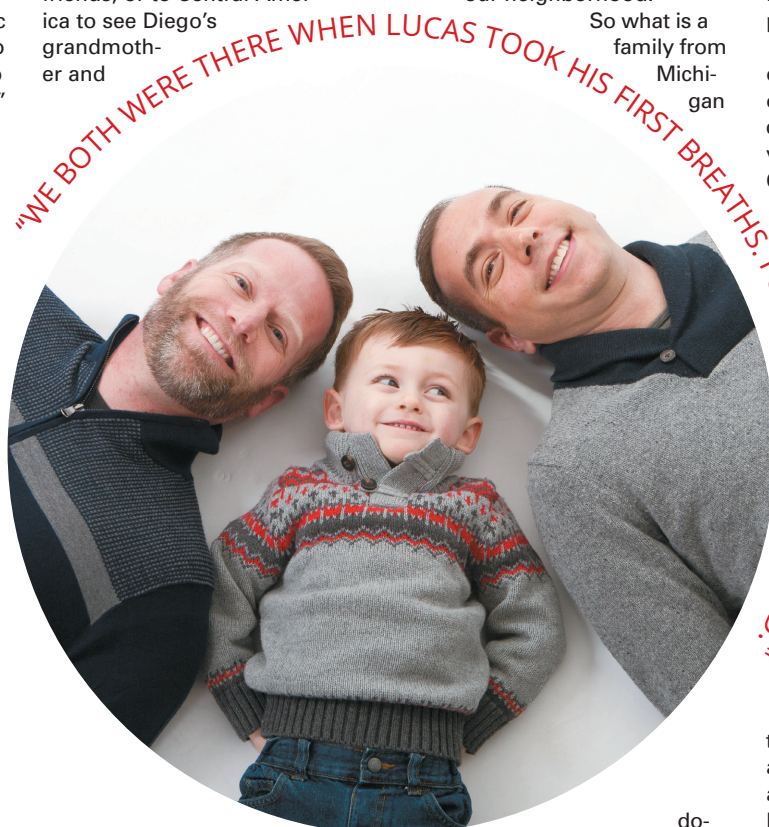
His vibrant nature is evident

as Lucas loves music and musical instruments, "reading" and telling stories, and enjoys school and friends. He also enjoys travel, which is something Kent and Diego tried to instill in him from a young age. Even though he is not quite four years old, Lucas has a passport and already has been on over 75 flights to various destinations, whether back to Michigan and New Mexico to see family, or around the country to see friends, or to Central America to see Diego's grandmother and

LGBT parents and their kids. Lucas got to high-five and hug the President. It was quite an honor, and we look forward to sharing pictures and video with Lucas when he is older and able to understand the significance of the honor."

Kent adds, "We had a good life in Michigan with a large support network of family and close friends. We were civically engaged, involved in the arts community, at church, and in our neighborhood."

So what is a family from Michigan



extended family. Diego is a pilot for Delta Air Lines, which makes frequent travel more feasible for the family.

"One of the highlights of our travels was joining a dozen other families for the White House Father's Day Lunch hosted by President Obama in the State Dining Room," Kent says. "We were one of two sets of gay fathers who were in attendance, and were selected in part because of our involvement with Family Equality Council and advocating on behalf of

doing in Minneapolis?

"Our decision to relocate was a difficult one that came after several years of discussing the possibility," Diego explains. "After adopting our son, it became harder to accept the uncertainty that came along with not having our marriage legally recognized by the state and not both being recognized as our son's legal parents, despite being selected as a couple by our son's birth family and both being present in the delivery room when he was born."

Their checklist for places to

relocate included remaining in the Midwest in a vibrant cosmopolitan city as well as be a direct flight back to Kent's family in Michigan and Diego's family in New Mexico.

"We attended two Family Equality Conferences in Minneapolis and watched closely as the state moved toward marriage equality for same-sex couples," Diego says. "The more we looked at the Twin Cities and the countless Top 10 lifestyle rankings, the more it felt like a possible fit."

Arriving in the Twin Cities on January 4, 2014, in the midst of the first Polar Vortex, the couple has grown to love the vibrancy and variety of the Twin Cities region. Kent shares, "It's taken some time to get settled, but we were so fortunate to connect early on with some wonderful new friends who welcomed us and helped get us connected. As a result, we have met some wonderful new friends and other LGBT parents and their kids."

What does a couple with a child do when they first move to the city? For Kent and Diego, that meant immediately purchasing memberships to the Minnesota Zoo, the Minnesota Children's Museum, Edinborough Park, and the YMCA. They've taken the time to enjoy the Children's Theatre Company, Theatre Latte Da, and the local arts scene. Trips to Lake Harriet, the Bandshell, and the Como-Harriet Streetcar were regular excursions this past summer. As the family gears up for their first full Minnesota winter, Kent says, "We're learning to embrace winter activities and the cold, which is made easier by the blue skies of Minnesota."

A significant part of the decision to leave Michigan related to the lack of legal recognition for both Kent and Diego as Lucas's adoptive parents. Only one was able to legally adopt Lucas in Michigan, even though they were selected as a couple by Lucas's birth parents. Diego says, "The non-adoptive parent was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46 ➔



# Children & Family

legally a stranger with no rights or recognition, which is extremely unsettling and unfair.”

After relocating to Minnesota, the couple worked with a local attorney to petition the court to waive the one-year residency requirement and secure legal recognition to the non-adoptive parent.

“The process involved a lot of legal fees, paperwork, and patience, but the security we gained for all three of us cannot be overstated,” Diego says. “We had our day in court in early July, after which we flew straight to Disney World to celebrate. No kidding. Just a few weeks ago we received our amended Michigan birth certificate with both of our names as Lucas’s legal parents. Despite still not being able to jointly adopt in Michigan or have our legal marriage recognized, Michigan must honor adoptions performed in other states. Even though the amended birth certificate was largely symbolic, it was a reassuring way to wrap up an uncertain time in our life as a family.”

The process is called something different in each state. It’s called step-parent adoption in Minnesota. In Michigan, it’s called second-parent adoption. Since same-sex couples could not—and still cannot—jointly adopt in Michigan, it became a two-step process that required the couple to have established residency in a state that allowed same-sex couples to both have parental rights of the same child.

While they’ve always been recognized and respected as a family by the people in their life, that level of certainty is a great comfort to Kent and Diego. Diego says, “We have never had direct interaction with anyone who insinuated that we weren’t a family. Yet the legal uncertainty for all three of us was an ever-present, and often unspoken, concern, despite both having incredibly supportive families. I would not say that we now feel more legitimate or more respected as a family, but we certainly feel safer and more secure.”

Moving to Minneapolis, the couple knew there were many GLBT families with children in the Twin Cities. After all, that

was a significant variable in their decision to relocate here. “We assumed, in part based on our experience at Family Equality Council conferences, that the community was well-connected and socially active,” Kent says. “Yet, once we got settled and attempted to get connected, we discovered the absence of a formalized community of support.”

As they talked with new friends, they discovered several reasons that might explain this lack of formal support or social groups for GLBT parents. Many families have “mainstreamed” and already have a community of support with their immediate and extended Minnesotan family, many GLBT parents who were socially active in the past now have older kids and established networks and no longer have need for social support, and there really isn’t a gay area in the Twin Cities, so families are geographically dispersed in a variety of neighborhoods.

“The inclusive nature of the Twin Cities is one of its strengths, but as gay men and gay dads, we still find value and relevance in having a sub-community of support,” Kent shares. “There are Facebook groups for Twin Cities queer families and lesbian moms. As I understand it, there was once a gay fathers group, but it was no longer active when we arrived in the Twin Cities.”

So they did what anyone would do: filled the void. Kent and Diego formed the Facebook group, Twin Cities Gay Fathers, in April 2014, a few months after their arrival. Since they didn’t yet have an established network in the Twin Cities, the couple relied on others to help spread the word. Currently, the group boasts 90 members, some with young kids, some with older kids, empty nesters, and dads-to-be. Kent says he does his best to screen requests to join the group to ensure a safe space for members to share stories and photos, seek advice, and socially connect.

“We don’t yet have regularly scheduled social gatherings for the entire group, in part because each gay father is at a different stage of his parenting journey,” Kent adds. “Instead we look to

individual members to coordinate meet-ups at various locations like the indoor park this winter, Como Zoo this summer, and cider mills this fall, or a cookie party later this month, based on their needs as a family.”

For the Love-Ramirez family, they’ve enjoyed meeting other gay dads with similar stories, as most gay dads from their community in Michigan had older children from past heterosexual relationships. Kent says, “A wonderful byproduct of the group has been for Lucas to see other families like his. I cannot overstate how heartening it is to hear him say without any prompting that someone ‘has two dads just like me.’”

Coming up on a year since their move to the City of Lakes, the couple has begun exploring other neighborhoods and schools in search of the right fit for their family.

“We still miss our family and friends back in Michigan and elsewhere, and are chipping away at the mysterious mannerism of Minnesota Nice,” Diego

says, “but we are hopeful about the future and very appreciative of our new friends and adoptive home here in the Twin Cities. We also are hopeful that we soon will welcome a second child to our family.”

Those without children always question parents: Another child?! But for Kent and Diego, each day is an adventure and blessing. “We only have vague recollection of life pre-Lucas,” Kent says. “Parenting has come naturally to both me and Diego, and it’s enriched us as individuals and strengthened us as a couple. We had very full lives and a sense of purpose prior to Lucas joining our family, but there is something about becoming parents that has filled a void. Parenting isn’t without its challenges. In fact, today was a particularly challenging day for no reason other than Lucas is a typical four-year-old. But when he gives you a big boy bear hug and says ‘Dad, I love you,’ you cannot help melt and love him even more.” ■







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# Children & Family

## ALL IN THE FAMILY

Confused. Hesitant. Conflicted. Concerned. Understanding. Excited.

Name an emotion, and I'm sure I've witnessed it in the one of the faces of people I've told that my brother is our sperm donor.

*Really?? But wait, how does that work? So, like, he's gonna be the dad? What are you going to tell your kid? Well, what if you and your brother get in a fight? But isn't that, like, incest? So are he and your wife going to...? Why don't you just adopt? Oh, so, your baby will be related to both of you! Aw, he's like your twin!*

I really don't divulge this information lightly, even though now it's in print and available for anyone and their mother to pick up and read. I'm aware that whenever people share personal information, it's inviting judgment. Is there any topic more personal?

So why talk about it? It was Harvey Milk who told us, "You must come out." We as a community know that the more we come out, the more we live our truth, the more normalized our lives become in the eyes of society. I don't think that ends with simply saying, "I am gay." I think we can go one step further, and

share what it's like to live as gay families and what unique challenges we face. Fortunately, my wife and my brother agree that whatever possible benefit to others that may be brought about with our disclosure outweighs any privacy concerns we may have.

I'm sure every gay person wishes they could procreate "the old fashioned way" with their spouse. I certainly do. (Spoiler alert: It doesn't work.) The fact that we can't isn't just emotionally difficult, it's also been used against us as the basis for religious attack, among other things.

For me, for us, we chose the next best thing. We chose one of the most important men in our lives, and certainly my biggest support, my chief confidant, and my closest friend throughout the years. To top all that off, he happened to be my brother and shared the same ancestry. It was a no-brainer. He is truly giving us the greatest gift.

As for those questions.

*But wait, how does that work?* Provided that it does work (here's hoping), that's for another column, another day.

*So, like, he's gonna be the dad?* Um no, he's Uncle Eddie.

*What are you going to tell your kid?* That Uncle Eddie gave your mommies the best

gift and helped us make you.

*Well, what if you and your brother get in a fight?* You don't know me and my brother. When we fight, it's smack talk about Fantasy Football.

*But isn't that, like, incest?* I'M not having my brother's baby. Gross, guys!

*So are he and your wife going to...?* Really?

*Why don't you just adopt?* We might someday, too. But for right now, this is our choice.

I must say, I've been surprised by who has inquired about our family plans, and who hasn't. After all, "first comes love, then comes marriage," and any kindergarten on the playground can tell you what comes next. My own insecurities about internalized homophobia have me worried that folks don't, and won't, see us as a "real" family. Fortunately, while performing his chief confidant duties, my brother reminded me that some folks simply aren't sure whether it's socially appropriate to ask.

(I'll tell you who HAS decided it's appropriate to ask: Target. And Facebook. Change your Facebook status to "Married" and cue the baby ads. Buy prenatal vitamins from Target *one time*, and instead of the usual dog treat cou-

pons, we've been bombarded with coupons for formula, diapers, and baby clothes.)

As with all sensitive issues, especially those that are deeply personal, prudence is essential to any line of questioning. To some, questions like "Who is going to carry?" and "Who is your donor?" are profoundly delicate and akin to asking heterosexual couples about their favorite positions or their family planning schedules. While I find it important for our community to share, other couples are presented with their own decisions that may not be as easy to make. There are those that use anonymous donors. Those who purposefully choose not to use known donors who are family members. Those who choose known donors outside of their families, and those who choose to adopt.

The best advice I could have for the curious is, if someone is sharing their family plans with you, listen. Acknowledge that they've shared something private and ask how you can offer support. In the sharing of our challenges and decisions, we're opening our hearts and coming out yet again. Hopefully, we'll also soon be sharing our joys. ■





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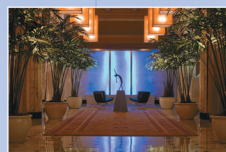
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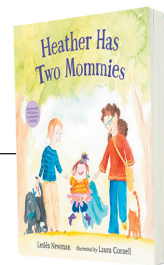
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# Children & Family

## 25 YEARS OF *HEATHER HAS TWO MOMMIES*



Twenty-five years ago, *Heather Has Two Mommies* was first launched into the world, starring a happy, five-year-old girl on her way to her first day of kindergarten. In the following decade, the picture book would go on to become one of the American Library Association's top ten most challenged books of the 1990s.

This March, Candlewick Press will reissue Lesléa Newman's landmark picture book, *Heather Has Two Mommies*, with brand new illustrations by Laura Cornell. *Heather* came into a world where same-sex marriage was not legal in a single state in the country. Today, she serves as a marker of how much America has changed, with 34 states and the District of Columbia issuing same-sex marriage licenses.

Newman wrote *Heather* in 1988 and sent it to about fifty publishers to no avail. Finally, Tzivia Gover, a lesbian mother who owned a desktop publishing business called In Other Words, decided to co-publish the book with Newman. Raising the bulk of the needed money with donations (most of which came in 10 dollar increments), Newman contributed the rest of the money and they found an illustrator.

In December 1989, four thousand copies arrived on Newman's doorstep. Six months later, Sasha Alyson, who had just published *Daddy's Roommate*, saw the book in New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and offered to become its publisher.

Newman says, "I never dreamed that a book I wrote that came from such humble

beginnings would be noticed, let alone banned, burned, defecated upon, read into the Congressional Record, written up in the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and *Newsweek*, parodied by Jon Stewart and many others, and finally republished by a well-established and respected children's book press."

More important than all of the controversies that have swirled around the book are the reactions of children, who, after all, are the book's intended audience. A lesbian mom told Newman that her son, Nick, crossed out the word *Heather* every time it appeared in the book and wrote in his name instead. Nick saw across gender lines and literally inserted himself into the story. This is only one of many stories of children reacting positively to the book.

Newman admits she has never met a child who had a problem with the notion that Heather has two mommies. "However, some adults (who forget the wisdom they had as children) have felt differently," she says. "I hope that now, two-and-a-half decades after publication, *Heather Has Two Mommies* will not be seen as controversial and can continue to delight children and adults alike with its portrayal of the many different types of families that exist in our society today."

As it did when it was first released in December of 1989, *Heather* reminds us of a timeless theme: "The most important thing about a family is that the people in it love each other." Join Candlewick Press and Lavender in wishing Heather and her two mommies a very happy 25th anniversary! ■



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# Religious Bigotry

There are three things in my life I am more ashamed of than anything else. The first is that I, a gay twenty-year-old man, shunned my cousin when she came out, along with the rest of my religious family. The second is that in 2004, I, a gay man, voted in favor of a constitutional amendment to restrict marriage to a man and a woman. The third is that in 2007, I, a gay man, married a really wonderful, sweet woman. How could all this have happened?

I was a gay religious bigot. I directed bigotry against myself so furiously that it led me to shun a lesbian cousin for twelve years, to vote against my own rights, and to get married. I did all of this despite every natural instinct in my gut and head and heart literally screaming at me not to do that. Eventually that bigotry led me into suicidal thoughts, depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, and a completely fake, double life. I did not choose all of this dysfunctionality. I was raised into it. I was indoctrinated into it. I was taught it by people who loved me and did not know what they were doing to me.

They also did not choose to be religious bigots. They based their bigotry, as I did, in their belief that a 2000-year-old book and a 2000-year-old institution trumped their human instincts, some might say God-given instincts, to let a child know that nothing—not even his sexual orientation—could make them stop loving him. And on my part, that same book and that same institution made me, contrary to all natural human instincts, be afraid that my dad, mom, sister, and the rest of my family would never speak to me again if they knew the truth about me. It led me not speak up for one of my own GLBT family members or speak to her, even though she is my cousin. It led me to alienate my own unalienable right to pursue marital happiness as a GLBT person. It led me to suppress my natural desire for love with

someone of my own gender. That kind of unnatural self-hate is not a choice.

My bigotry didn't disappear when I came out a few years later. No, when I came out is when I really started hating myself, because then self-bigotry was coupled with depression that I had let down all these religious bigots, whom I truly and dearly loved, *even though they were now shunning me, too!* So I fell even deeper into depression, substance abuse, and thought more and more about killing myself.

Lately I have seen the slogan going around, "Being gay is not a choice; religious bigotry is." No, religious bigotry is not a choice. It is so completely unhuman. It goes against every natural instinct, whether you believe that instinct comes from God or evolution. "Religious bigots" are human beings just as we are. They were indoctrinated to do what a sacred text has often through the centuries been interpreted to do. The design for living laid down in some portions of sacred texts actually differentiate between people. Some people are considered different from others: Jews from Gentiles, Christians from Jews, men from women, masters from slaves, clergy from laity, and, yes, straights from gays. For most of its history, the Christian Church and the civilizations it dominated interpreted "different from" to mean "better than."

Being gay is not a choice. None of us can recall the day we chose to be gay. Being a religious bigot is not a choice. As a former religious bigot, I can assure you I never made a choice to become a religious bigot. It was a learned way of seeing the world, and seeing myself. It took me years to take off my bigotry goggles to see myself and my life and my world as they truly are. I am a human being with a life worth living fully and happily. Once I grasped that fact, then I could see that every human has the same life worth living fully and happily.

That's why it makes me cringe when people in the GLBT community start to think in terms of "them" and "us." "They" may be religious bigots, but they, too, are human beings. "They" are our parents, our grandparents, our children, our relatives, our friends. In fact, "they" are, in all likelihood, just as emotionally and psychologically damaged by religious bigotry as we are when it comes to sexuality. The guilt, shame, and fear that GLBT human beings are made to feel by some over their sexuality is the exact same shame, guilt, and fear that straight human beings are made to feel over their own sexuality. And just as many GLBT people sought relief in religion from that shame and guilt, so straight human beings look for relief in religion as well. Sometimes "they" hate themselves so much, "they" hate "us" too.

What the gay rights movement has to be about is not just gay sex and gay love and gay marriage. Maybe what we can contribute to society is a new understanding of human sexuality, human love, human marriage—an understanding free of guilt, shame, and fear. It's going to take a long time to undo thousands of years of psychological damage done by a culture that embraced a low view of human sexuality (read: only for procreation). But this will never happen if "we" think of ourselves as "we," and religious bigots, as "them."

Recently I told my six-year-old son about a friend who married his boyfriend. My son said, "Oh! That's really nice!" He hasn't been taught that there's an "us" and a "them." He just knows that it's nice when people love each other. Is that too simple? Or is that too profound? Let's love religious bigots into love, engage them, talk with them. Maybe then they'll see and we'll see that there really is no "they" and there really is no "us." We'll just all see ourselves as human beings. ■





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# Ren Rushold is Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2015



(From left) Ren Rushold, moments after being selected Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2015; Contestant Bernd Wellkamp during the question-and-answer portion of the contest; Contestant Russell Waisanen during the Keg Walk portion of the contest; Contestant Ren Rushold selling Jello shots during the Friday night Greet-the-Meat event; Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2014 Jason Little during his step-aside speech on Saturday night. Photos by Steve Lenius.

Ren Rushold became the Twin Cities' newest leather titleholder at this year's Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2015 contest. The contest was part of an entire weekend of events that took place November 14–16, 2014, at the EagleBoltBar in Minneapolis. This year's co-producers, Derek Harley and Ryan Brown, along with executive producer Ed Hopkins (owner of the EagleBoltBar), presented the most organized, punctual, and polished contest in the event's history.

This year's organizers used technology to enhance the weekend. The contest's former venue, the Bolt Underground, has been closed, so this year's contest was held in the Bolt Bar. Because every video screen in the bar complex carried sound and video of the contest, there wasn't a bad seat in the house. In addition, a downloadable Yapp app for iOS and Android devices put all the details about the weekend's events literally at peoples' fingertips.

The weekend started with a Greet-the-Meat party Friday evening at which a welcome letter from Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges was read from the stage. In the letter she specifically thanked Jason Little, the outgoing Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2014, for his community work in education and activism. (Meanwhile, in a show of support for the mayor, many audience members were taking and posting #pointergate photos.)

On Saturday afternoon the contestants had their private interviews with the judges. Other weekend attendees enjoyed a series of three leather educational sessions presented by Kink U. Judges for the weekend were Jason Little, Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2014; Ramien Pierre, Mr. DC Eagle 2014 and the current International Mr. Leather 2014; Bootblack Kai, Great Lakes Bootblack 2013; Drew Riebhoff, Mr. Iowa Leather 2014; Valkyrie, a member of the Knights of Leather; Joseph "Rocky" McCombs, Mr. Ohio Leather 2013; and Tim Holden, a member of the Atons of Minneapolis.

Saturday evening's contest and show opened with a blessing by the Ladies of the Lake, the Minneapolis chapter of the famous Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. This was followed by a videotaped welcome from Chuck Renslow, executive producer of the International Mr. Leather contest weekend in Chicago.

The evening's three contestants—Bernd Wellkamp, Ren Rushold, and Russell Waisanen—were introduced during the traditional Keg Walk, in which each man hauled a beer keg through the crowd and up to the stage. The three contestants also competed in a question-and-answer segment in which the audience helped choose the questions.

In the final judging segment of the contest, each competitor presented a fantasy (an erotic

skit). Wellkamp gave a kinky Minnesota travelogue; Rushold presented a cop-and-delinquent shadowplay scene; and Waisanen's fantasy featured a cowboy seduction.

Saturday evening's show also included a parade of club colors and the introduction of an extensive line-up of current and former titleholders and other VIPs from across North America.

In his step-aside speech, outgoing Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2014 Jason Little talked about community health, both mental and physical. He specifically spoke in support of Truvada, the pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) medication for HIV prevention. The medication was approved by the FDA in 2013 for PReP use, but remains controversial and an occasion for name-calling in some quarters. During his speech Little swallowed a Truvada pill onstage and declared, "If this is what it means to take charge of my sexual health, then I am fucking proud to be a Truvada whore!"

Little's final act as Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2014 was to place the title sash on his successor, who turned out to be Rushold. As Mr. Minneapolis Eagle 2015, Rushold will represent EagleBoltBar and Minnesota's leather community in the 37th annual International Mr. Leather competition ([www.imrl.com](http://www.imrl.com)), May 22-25, 2015 (Memorial Day weekend) in Chicago. ■





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### *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie*

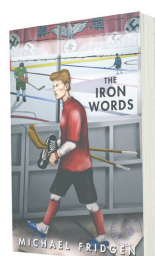
Rita Mae Brown  
Ballantine Books  
\$26



The ninth of the “Sister” Jane foxhunting series is off to a galloping start. On a fateful Ides of March, a storm breaks off a tree limb. It falls, by chance into the oldest American equine graveyard, opening a can of worms and remains that are definitely bipedal. Interwoven with fascinating details of the hunt (no foxes are injured in these pages). Jane, a sturdy and implacable septuagenarian, is determined to solve an old murder, and in so doing, finds it linked to the present day and the tangled history of three ancestral families; their bloodlines and the bloodlines of their thoroughbreds. Brown, as in her Sneaky Pie Brown series, enfolds fascinating, factual—and readily digestible—lore into the adrenaline rush of the mystery solving.

### *The Iron Words*

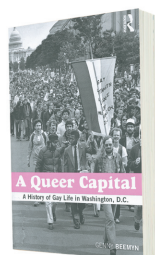
Michael Frigden  
Dreamily Books  
\$10



Riley Hunter has it made. His grades are “handled” by the University of Minnesota in return for hockey victories. To pass sociology Riley undertakes a special assignment caretaking Jens Jaenisch, a ninety-year-old Holocaust survivor. Riley finds Jens has a secret, just as he does. Learning Jens is not a Jew, Riley fears he was a Nazi. Then, hesitantly, Jens tells how at seventeen, he was arrested and sent to Buchenwald with a pink star. As Jens shares his harrowing story, sharing his secret for the first time, Riley’s secret guilt builds. Riley is straight, not gay. Frigden has not chosen a simple sharing of one gay generation with another, although both Jens and Riley learn to love and change in this thoughtful, highly charged novel.

### *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.*

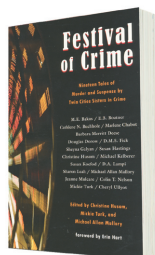
Genny Beemyn  
Routledge  
\$44.95



Genny Beemyn explores gay life in Washington, D.C., from the late nineteenth century through the 1990s, with meticulous research and a flair for the human, examining the dynamics of race, gender, and class that added further needs for circumspection in the lives of GLBT people of the time. Director of The Stonewall Center at the University of Massachusetts, Beemyn used extensive archival material as well as interviews with 108 Washingtonians between 1994–2000, and 2012–13. One chapter dealing with class lines drawn within the group of people of color is especially interesting, as is rare diary material by Carter Newman Bealer, a “white, middle-class Washingtonian born at the turn of the twentieth century.” Illustrations and a map of areas popular from 1945–60 are included.

### *Festival of Crime: Nineteen Tales of Murder and Suspense by Twin Cities Sisters in Crime*

Ed. Christine Husom, Mickie Turk and Michael Allen Mallory  
Nodin Press  
\$16.95  
Routledge



Minnesota abounds in festivals, and in crime, too, it would seem. Here nineteen local authors, members of the Twin Cities Sisters in Crime (and brothers) offer an abundance of mayhem and celebration to be found right in our backyards; at Cinco de Mayo, Oktoberfest and others. Cheryl Ulyot’s “Loony Daze” is a neat, pert tale, chilling and witty, involving wiener dog races, a wife-killer, and the legendary Hairy Man of Vergas; Michael Kelberer’s “The Wooden Boat Show,” embarks on the chill shores of Lake Superior, weaving a generations-old web of larceny with modern day murder; Douglas Dorrow’s “All Sales Final” brings larceny to Art in the Park, while this writer’s “No Time Like the Present” offers a Pride ghost story out of the past. ■



# Randy's Favorite Vehicles of 2014

OK, my turn...

Every year, I get the opportunity to drive a lot of vehicles. Some vehicles have been driven for around 15-20 minutes; others for as long as a week. In 2014, I averaged more than a vehicle a week...frankly, I lost count. Not that I record each vehicle when I drive it...it has been a year where it has been a mix of great vehicles too many to recall.

*Lavender Magazine* asked me what my "Best of 2014" was and I came up with this list. This was reflected upon a calendar year's worth of cars, trucks, Crossover/SUVs and vans to not just pick my favorites...but to fit them into a "Best of" format.

And, they are...

**2014 ACURA MDX:** Perhaps the best luxury crossover for the money. Acura has been enjoying great success with its three-row premium mid-sized family hauler. In fact, new customers are upgrading from the smaller RDX into the bigger model. Why? It drives superbly, has an exceptional all-wheel drive system, and is comfortable inside. Need any more reasons?

**2014 BUICK REGAL:** It was driven in Los Angeles and lapped at Road America. These are things you are not supposed to do with a Buick. So what? The Regal accomplished both tasks beautifully, thank you!

**2014 CADILLAC CTS VSPORT:** This is, in my humble opinion, the best Cadillac ever.

**2014 CHEVROLET SS:** It was everything it advertised. This Holden VF Commodore SS with the Chevy bowtie is not just a fire-breathing monster. It gobbled up roads with driving dynamics unmatched by any measure.

**2015 CHRYSLER 200:** Al Gardner is directing the former upscale brand toward a mainstream path. The first sign of this shift is the 200. Well done, Mr. Gardner!



CADILLAC CTS VSPORT



2015 PORSCHE MACAN



2014 MAZDA3



2015 DODGE CHALLENGER



2014 INFINITI Q50



MERCEDES-BENZ S-CLASS



2015 LEXUS ES 350



2014 TOYOTA RAV4

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58 ➔



**2015 DODGE CHALLENGER:** The best way to sum this up is what one of you asked in a comment on Facebook: "Did you find a car you would buy?" It would be the one car I truly fell in love with after a week's seat time.

**2014 DODGE DART GT:** The Dart has still got it. Two years after my first drive, I can confirm that (a) the 2.4-liter Tigershark/MultiAir II was worth the wait, (b) the Dart has some of the best driving dynamics of any car in its class and (c) it still does it for me. What is "it?" That would be the huge smile on my face after a drive in one.

**2014 HYUNDAI EQUUS:** Limousine space, comfort, and ride. It behaved exceptionally well for being a large luxurious sedan better appointed for livery service than a driver's flagship.

**2015 HYUNDAI SONATA:** The previous model shook up a lot of conventional wisdom. The new model continues to do so, but in a mature fashion. If you still want something completely different, drive the Eco with its 1.6-liter turbo and dual-clutch transmission. Better still, buy one.

**2014 INFINITI Q50:** In a segment where the emphasis is on "sport," there is some true

luxury to be had. It is such a nice touring sedan that is athletic, but with a soft side, too. A nice balance, in my book!

**2015 LEXUS ES 350:** You know that warm, fuzzy feeling when you settle into a nice, comfortable place where everything is simply special? Add a V6, navigation and satellite radio to it, and you get this. Who needs hot stone massaging seats and a fragrance for the cabin when all you need is this car to take away the stress from your life?

**2014 MASERATI Ghibli:** A mid-sized luxury touring sedan with a throaty exhaust connected to a twin-turbocharged Ferrari-developed V6...shall I go on?

**2014 MAZDA3:** Best compact in the market? Absolutely! And, why have you not driven one?

**2014 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA:** "Jinba ittai." In Japanese, that means, "Whoa, this roadster's so cool!" Not to mention, it's one hell of a driving machine!

**2014 MERCEDES-BENZ S-CLASS:** As a child, I viewed the S-Class as the pinnacle of what Daimler brought onto the world. Having

driven one, I could only imagine how it would still retain this lofty vision. The W222 simply blew me away. However, it was not the S 550 that did so. It was the S 63 AMG.

**2014 PORSCHE CAYMAN:** If you remember what a Porsche used to be, the Cayman will remind you of a time when they were pure and potent. The Cayman is a time machine back to the 1970s when Carrera 2.7s and 911SCs rocked Mulholland and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Yet, it is still a modern Porsche—engine midships, in front of the axle with today's interior amenities.

**2015 PORSCHE MACAN:** Before anyone sings "The Eye of The Tiger" or "Hold That Tiger," understand that Porsche made a small crossover for enthusiasts. Between the power, the Porsche-like cabin, and the ride-handling mix, betting against the Macan is not recommended.

**2014 TOYOTA RAV4:** It defined the hot-test segment in today's vehicular universe. That was almost two decades ago. Today, consumers have gone elsewhere. The original still works—and well, may I add. Why not come back to the original? ■



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# Emily's Gift

I've been telling people for weeks I already have this year's Christmas present, that I don't need a single other thing. In fact, I'm actually good for the rest of my life; I won't want anything else, ever.

What gift could be so incredible?

That gift is my twenty-four-year-old daughter, Emily. In October, she came back into my life after years of estrangement.

Those familiar with my story know that I have two daughters, Emily, and her younger sister, Lily. (Note: I always use pseudonyms when I write about my daughters.) They grew up in Cedar Rapids living a perfect life that included me as a hard-charging trial lawyer dad, a loving and devoted mother/my beautiful wife, a big house in the best neighborhood, Catholic school uniforms, and a hyperactive golden retriever named "Sam."

A clump of words—"Dad's moving out," "Divorce," "Transgender"—started a new life for me but ended my family's perfect life. Seared into my memory is how Emily ran from hearing those words; moments later, she was on her bed in a fetal position, sobbing uncontrollably, clutching her favorite stuffed animal. Her tears, echoing throughout the big house, burned through five layers of my soul.

It's a moment I will never be able to forget.

What followed were months of unreturned phone calls, refused visits, and painful silence at family gatherings. I wrote Emily letter after letter, email after email, and card after card, apologizing, pleading, and hoping for a second chance. I explained that I had done everything humanly possible to stay living as a man, to remain the dad she'd grown up with.

Emily eventually resumed contact, but things were never close to what had been. When I began to live as a woman in 2009, Emily refused to see me in person. Our relationship was reduced to terse phone conversations that occurred months apart.

It didn't help that my youngest daughter, Lily, was more accepting. Emily saw this, which piled guilt and shame on top of gigantic loss.

Throughout everything, I was haunted by a photograph of Emily and me taken when we visited the Iowa State Fair on one incredible golden August afternoon. The photo shows me, a crew-cut dude in shorts, T-shirt, and baseball cap, kneeling next to a three-year-old Emily; she's wearing an adorable pink sundress and smiling, ecstatic to have a day alone with her dad. There it was, unmistakable proof that love would forever bond us.

I had believed that nothing—not even me leaving our family to discover my true self as a woman—could break that bond.

After I so hurt Emily and others, there were times when I wondered, *Did I try my best to stay a man?* Sometimes I beat myself up: *How could you have ever been so selfish and hurt those you love?*

With much hard work, I came to understand the painful truth that being true to one's self and living authentically take precedence over broken hearts. I could only hope that Emily would someday similarly understand this.

My plan: I would stay open and wait for Emily to come around, even if waiting meant the rest of my life. I wasn't about to let the pain of Emily's rejection slam shut the door to my heart.

Then something happened. For privacy reasons, I can disclose only that for the first time in her life, Emily discovered what it meant to truly struggle as a human. That helped her to become more understanding about me; now she saw that my transitioning genders wasn't a choice.

Thus we started down the reconciliation road with baby steps—telephone calls, emails, and texts. That led to an overnight visit in St. Louis, where Emily was living. Soon later, I visited for three days. Incredibly, Emily then decided to live with me in Minneapolis, something that I had thought was utterly impossible even just a few months ago.

While many who come out as GLBT lose others in their lives, we transgender folk seem to lose people to a greater degree and quality. For some Ts, the loss is just too much to humanly bear, which in part explains why it's the Ts who have the highest rates of depression, addictions, and suicides.

To those who have lost someone because of coming out as the *real you*, please take heart. Emily's gift of reconciliation is proof that people can change. Those who have gone missing sometimes realize that life is so incredibly short; they then come back to us, to those they had rejected for simply being authentic.

I urge you to always remain open to the people you've lost. Keep the door to your heart wide open, not bolted shut.

My gender journey, which began with words that hurt Emily, has taught me so very much. It has been an amazing process of losses, challenges, rewards, and resiliency.

Yet, there's one thing that I've learned above all else: the power of love. From that flows something equally powerful—immense gratitude.

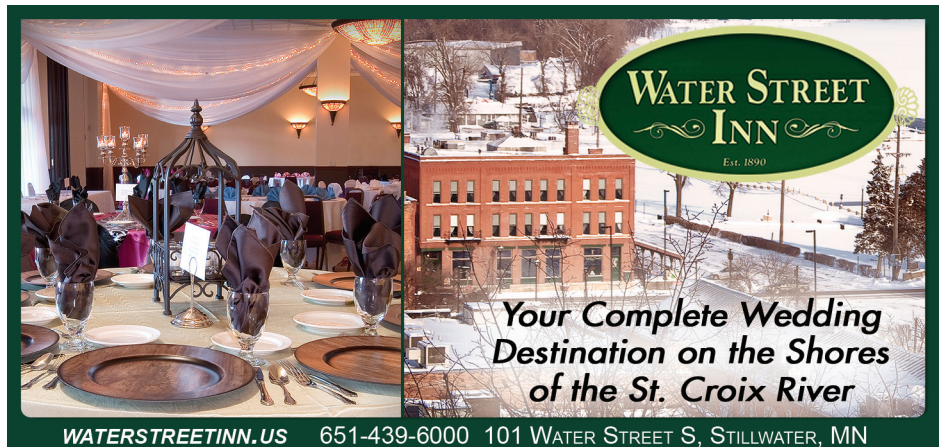
Thank you, my beloved Emily, for coming back to me, for finally understanding.

For loving me, your dad, regardless of my gender.

For being the best Christmas gift, ever. ■

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# Life Lessons

I'm writing this on the day before I turn 50. I'm about to head down to New Orleans to kill off the last few brain cells that made it through my youth, and also very probable to break a hip.

I was thinking this would be the perfect time to write a column from Old Jen to Young Jen. Tell Young Jen all the wise things I have learned over the years that would prevent her from making terrible life choices. But, honestly, why waste my energy? Young Jen was an idiot. She'd take one look at me in my withered lumpy form and a.) try to sleep with me (Young Jen had a mommy complex) and b.) knock me over the head and steal all my money. She certainly wouldn't listen to a damn thing I'd tell her.

So, instead, I'm going to share all of my hard-earned wisdom with you, my dear readers. Here's a list of life lessons that you can write on the back of your hand in case you need a crib sheet when you venture out into the scary world.

Always bring a hostess gift. If you've been invited to someone's home for a party, slap a bow on a trinket and present it at the door. Doesn't really matter what you bring, but the bow is essential. It shows that you cared enough to remember to get a bow. This will make you very attractive to the hostess, and will usually lead to some constructive groping in the coat closet.

Don't have an adulterous affair. Forget about the moral implications for a moment and consider this: it's just not fun. That's what no one tells you before you embark on one of these things. You always think it's going to be oh-so-French and that it will make you a more interesting person: the type of person who wears linen and is often caught staring dreamily into mid-distance. But after the initial thrill of doing something

naughty, it leaves you feeling dirty and not in a good way...like you've taken a dip in an oil slick or haven't brushed your teeth in several days.

Pick up a check once in a while, you cheapskate! I've never regretted being too generous. I always grab for the check and over-tip. For one thing, it makes me seem like Frank Sinatra, and who didn't want to sleep with Frank Sinatra? Conversely, who ever wanted to sleep with the legendary miser Hetty Green? Google her. Would you want to sleep with her?

When traveling in an Amtrak sleeper car, always bring your own cleaning supplies. I love traveling by rail but Amtrak is filthy and the porters are passive-aggressive. They often conveniently forget to clean the berths between trips. So, bring disinfectant. Also, the club car usually runs out of good snacks within the first hour of a long trip because the Amish people who dominate the passenger manifest are terrible hoarders. They buy up everything immediately and refuse to share. Bring your own treats.

Finally, be nice to your elders. I'm not saying this just because I'm now officially old. Rather, it's good karma and also makes good business sense. If some old fool pulls you aside at a cocktail party and spouts a lot of nonsense about how you should live your life, nod your head vigorously and agree with everything they say. Because you're young and stupid, they know you won't follow any of their advice, but they will appreciate your kindness and attention. And they will leave you all of their jewels when they die. In fact, I'm writing you all into my will right now. ■

*Gang: you're welcome to visit with me on Facebook and Twitter. You'll find me under my true identity—jenniferparello—on both sites.*

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[www.mnrcumc.org](http://www.mnrcumc.org)

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[www.minneapolismoviebears.com](http://www.minneapolismoviebears.com)

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# Unicorn At a Gay Bar

Cologne, body odor, clothes that smell of cigarettes. The music is a pleasant surprise: '90s pop—certainly more infectious than the heart-pounding techno in the room adjacent.

Barely legal boys in underwear prance around with trays of shots, smiling at everyone but advancing sales only with those with whom they are familiar; attention to new buyers is reactionary.

Loners appear occasionally and they're never still. They walk in endless loops, desperate for friends, expecting future besties to stop them mid-run.

Groups dominate and intra-clique diversity echoes in their glasses: they're almost exclusively vodka drinkers. Gin drinkers are sparse and flower curiosity for preaching their poison's gospel.

Affection is rare, premiering one hour before bar close and with Lion King fare; handshakes are rarer and rest on the unicorn-likely chance that someone meets a stranger and dares an official introduction. Friendly introductions aren't altogether uncommon, but physical involvement at even the lowest level is uncomfortable. Acquaintanceship develops slowly and erratically and only through friends-of-friends or with girl-friendly buffers. Hardline introductions are too rejection-prone and obligatory.

Attire is casual: mostly mainstream and logo-laden, but runs the gamut to ill-fitted button downs, to the mainstream but logo-absent, to the city's ultimate taboo: non-gender-conforming.

Patrons salivate over traditional—nay, chauvinistic—ideas of masculinity and force it

onto themselves. The manliest looking among them opens his mouth and contradicts his appearance. This isn't always the case, of course, and the man of true brute is known by the number of his congregants.

Boys in make-up are rampant and are unsurprisingly the most flamboyant. Their teeth are white, their skin is tan, their clothes are slim, their hair is flawless and of utmost concern. They wage war against weight gain and poverty: here, five pounds cost five friends and high credit scores signal missed opportunities.

Most interesting are the unpredictables—those who seem relaxed but not drunk, and the dark inexplicables who are alone but not lonely. These groups are judged harshest by high-grade peers. Their presence is cancerous: leaving oneself to his own devices risks irreverence; the idea is foreign and threatening.

"Hello, I'm Justin," I say and take a seat next to a stranger waiting for a drink. He looks at me.

"Someone's sitting there," he says.

"Oh, sorry." I stand.

Silence.

The bartender passes us by, tending to other customers, and the air between my failed acquaintance and I grows uncomfortable. No one takes the seat next to him. I've just come from a fundraiser and I'm wearing a suit. I suppose my outfit has pushed him away.

I see from across the bar a man I slept with a few years ago. I think. Is he looking at me? I'm not wearing my glasses so I can't tell. I wave just in case. The wave goes unreturned.

I catch a couple of boys in the corner star-

ing at me. They blush and scramble to look away. Not far from them a man who calls me "bitch" in close enough proximity for me to hear but far enough away to chalk up to "I was talking about someone else" blows me a kiss.

My failed acquaintance pays for his drink and shoves past me. The guy standing beside him moves into his place and I'm relegated to either wait again or to take my chances with the "taken" seat beside him. I sit down.

I wave to someone who waves to me whom I can't remember, who then gives me an awkward expression. I turn to see that he hadn't waved to me at all, but to a girl behind me. I need to wear my glasses more often, I think, and I need a drink.

"Hey, I saw that," says the guy who skipped me. He nudges me and smiles. He directs my attention back to my wav-ee, who now has his mouth to a friend's ear and his eye in my direction, laughing. I wave again. They stop laughing.

"Oh snap," says my neighbor. "Oh no you didn't."

I blush and extend my hand. He takes it. We talk over each other.

"Justin"/"Ben" we say at once, pause, do it again, and laugh.

"It's okay, we'll forget each other's name in an hour or so," he says.

"Cheers to that."

We strike up a conversation that evolves from observations and complaints about bar life to memories of high school dances and embarrassing first dates. After many drinks, we sing an a cappella rendition of "My Little Pony." ■

From all of us at LAVENDER Magazine

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